

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
SOCIALISM

This volume describes the various movements and parties, across all six continents, that wanted social change through state transformation. It begins with a reconstruction of social democracy's trajectories from the 1870s until the present. The evolution of socialism on different continents is illustrated through a number of national case studies. Experiments at a subnational level (for example, municipal socialism) are also explored, as are the varying experiences of international umbrella organizations. The next part focuses on divergent socialist experiments and ideologies in several parts of the world, including South Asia, Africa, the Arab world, Brazil, Venezuela, and Israel/Palestine, followed by an overview of 'independent' socialist movements, including left-socialist parties of the 1930s and the post-war period, and the global New Left since its beginnings in the 1950s. The volume concludes with critical essays on socialism's long-term and global development.

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
SOCIALISM

Divided into two volumes, *The Cambridge History of Socialism* offers an up-to-date critical survey of the socialist movements and political practices that have arisen thus far throughout the world. A much-needed corrective of the current state of the study of socialism from a historical perspective, the volumes use a wider geographical and temporal focus to track the changes and trends in global socialisms and to move beyond the European trajectory. Together they cover anarchism, syndicalism, social democracy, labour, the New Left, and alternative socialist movements in the Global South in one encompassing reconstruction. Featuring fifty-five essays by experts across the field, the volumes will serve as examples of the rich variety of socialist histories and, together, endeavour to reveal the major contours of its development.

VOLUME I

EDITED BY MARCEL VAN DER LINDEN

VOLUME II

EDITED BY MARCEL VAN DER LINDEN

THE CAMBRIDGE
HISTORY OF
SOCIALISM

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VOLUME II

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International Institute of Social History



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Abbreviations

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AD	Acción Democrática
ADAV	Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein
AES	Alternative Economic Strategy
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFPFL	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League
AKP(ml)	Arbeidernes Kommunistparti (Marxist-Leninistisk)
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América
ALÖS	Auslandsbüro der österreichischen Sozialdemokraten
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANC	African National Congress
ANPO	Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku
APR	Alternativa Popular Revolucionaria
ASC	Asian Socialist Conference
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRS	Bond van Revolutionaire Socialisten
BSP	Bolshevik Samasamaja Party
BWPP	Burma Workers and Peasants Party
CC	Communal Council
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union
CEB	comunidades eclesiais de base
CEM	Council of European Municipalities
CFDT	Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLPD	Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

List of Abbreviations

Comintern	Communist International
Conclat	Conselho das Classes Trabalhadoras
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPP	Convention People's Party
CSN	Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
ČSSD	Česká strana sociálně demokratická
CUT	Central Única dos Trabalhadores
CVG	Corporación Venezolana de Guayana
DFPE	Democratic Front for Peace and Equality
DNA	Det Norske Arbeiderpartiet
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DSOC	Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee
EBR-200	Ejército Revolucionario Bolivariano-200
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EMILY	Early Money Is Like Yeast
EPSC	Empresa de Propiedad Social Comunal
ERP	Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo
ESU	Etudiants Socialistes Unifiés
FALN	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional
FATULS	Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies
FCI	Federación Comunista Ibérica
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FGCI	Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FLP	Frente de Liberación Popular
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional
FTAA	Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
GPP	Gran Polo Patriótico
GUE	Gauche Unitaire Européenne
ICFTU	International Confederation of Trade Unions
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
ICSDW	International Council of Social Democratic Women

List of Abbreviations

ICWG	International Co-operative Women's Guild
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
IFWW	International Federation of Working Women
ILLA	Independent Labor League of America
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILP	Independent Labour Party
INC	Indian National Congress
INOC	Iraq National Oil Company
IPC	Iraq Petroleum Company
IRMC	International Revolutionary Marxist Centre
ISI	import substitution industrialization
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
IUSY	International Union of Socialist Youth
IVKO	Internationale Vereinigung der Kommunistischen Opposition
IWFAW	International Workers Front against the War
IWMA	International Working Men's Association
IWSA	International Woman Suffrage Alliance
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
JCP	Japan Communist Party
JNR	Japan National Railways
JSP	Japan Socialist Party
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
KPÖ	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LO	Landsorganisationen i Sverige
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
LRWP	League for a Revolutionary Workers Party
LSI	Labour and Socialist International
LSM	Labor Settlement Movement
LSSP	Lanka Sama Samaja Party
MAN	Movement of Arab Nationalists
MAPU	Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario
MBR-200	Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
MDB	Movimento Democrático Brasileiro
MEFESZ	Magyar Egyetemisták és Főiskolások Szövetsége
MEP	Mahajana Eksath Peramuna

List of Abbreviations

MIR	Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria
MLL	Marx-Lenin-Luxemburg-Front
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
MSPD	Mehrheitssozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra
MVR	Movimiento V República
NDP	New Democratic Party/Nouveau Parti démocratique
NEC	National Executive Committee
NGL	Nordic Green Left
NLL	National Liberation League
NSPP	Niezależna Socjalistyczna Partia Pracy
NSSP	New Sama Samaja Party
NSW	New South Wales
NTT	Nippon Telephone and Telegraph
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSP	Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij
PA	Progressive Alliance
PASOK	Panellenio Sosialistikó Kinima
PAWS	Palestine Arab Workers Society
PCdoB	Partido Comunista do Brasil
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PCP	Palestine Communist Party
PCV	Partido Comunista de Venezuela
PD	Partito Democratico
PDP	Programa Democrático-Popular
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus
PDT	Partido Democrático Trabalhista
PdVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PL	Partido Liberal
PLN	Partido Liberación Nacional
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PMDB	Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro
POS	Partido Obrero Socialista
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista
PPC	popular constituent process
PPF	Pacto de Punto Fijo
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna

List of Abbreviations

PPT	Patria Para Todos
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRD	Partido Revolucionario Dominicano
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
PRT	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores
PS	Parti Socialiste (France)
PS	Partido Socialista de Argentina
PS	Partido Socialista de Chile
PSA	Partido Socialista Argentino
PSAV	Partido Socialista Argentino de Vanguardia
PSD	Partido Socialista Democrático
PSI	Partai Sosialis Indonesia
PSI	Partido Socialista Independiente (Argentina)
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
PSIUP	Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria
PSO	Partido Socialista Obrero
PSOL	Partido Socialismo e Liberdade
PSOP	Parti socialiste ouvrier et paysan
PSP	Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij (Netherlands)
PSP	Partido Socialista (Portugal)
PSP	Partido Socialista Popular (Argentina)
PSP	Praja Socialist Party (India)
PSU	Parti Socialiste Unifié
PSUV	Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PV	Partido Verde
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid
RLP	radical left parties
RS	Revolutionäre Sozialisten Österreichs
RSAP	Revolutionair-Socialistische Arbeiderspartij
RSDRP	Rossiiskaia Sotsial'demokraticheskaia Rabochaia Partii
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SAP	Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei
SAP	Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti
SAPD	Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
SCAP	Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers
SDAPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs
SDF	Social Democratic Federation

List of Abbreviations

SDJP	Social Democratic Party of Japan
SDKPiL	Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy
SDP	Sociaal Democratische Partij (Netherlands)
SDP	Social Democratic Party (UK)
SDP	Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (Finland)
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (Germany)
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society (USA)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SF	Socialistisk Folkeparti (Denmark)
SF	Sosialistisk Folkeparti (Norway)
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
SI	Socialist International
SKP	Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti
SLD	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLPP	Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna
SMUSE	Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SOPO	Sozialistische Politik
SPA	Socialist Party of America
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs
SPS	Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz
SSP	Sveriges Socialistiska Parti
SV	Sosialistisk Venstreparti
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
TANU	Tanzanian African National Union
TCO	Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation
TSYSHO	Tsentrale yidishe shul organizatsie
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UAPD	Unabhängige Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
UCR	Unión Cívica Radical
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UNEF	Union nationale des étudiants de France
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNP	United National Party
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
UP	Unidad Popular

List of Abbreviations

URPTW	Union of Railway, Postal, and Telegraph Workers
USA	United Socialist Alliance
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
VLSSP	Viklavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party
VpK	Vänsterpartiet-Kommunisterna
VS	Venstresocialisterne
WA	Western Australia
WASG	Wahlalternative Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit
WASI	Women and Social Movements Internationally
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
ZMP	Związek Młodzieży Polskiej

List of Abbreviations

Introduction to Volume II

MARCEL VAN DER LINDEN

The idea that social justice could be promoted by conquering and transforming state power first emerged at the municipal level in the eastern part of the United States, where local workingmen's parties were founded in about 1830. Three factors seem to have played roles in their establishment. First, the weakness of state governments compared with the relative power of municipalities. Secondly, the early enfranchisement of a large part of 'the non-propertied class': in Pennsylvania in 1790, in Massachusetts in 1820, and in New York in 1822. And, thirdly, recent economic problems (the Panic of 1825, the trade war with England in 1826–7, and the recession of 1828–9), which made artisans and wage-earners realize that equality at the ballot box was by no means the same as equality of working and living conditions.

In Philadelphia, the first Working Men's Party emerged from the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations in 1828. During its brief existence the party participated in elections, organized clubs to raise political awareness, and held conventions. Although the party also pursued other goals, such as the abolition of monopolies, its main focus was on education, because better education was thought to foster equality among all citizens. The relative success of the organization led its opponents to try to undermine it. The party disappeared suddenly in 1832. There are varying opinions as to why it failed.¹

In 1829, a workingmen's party was also established in New York City, but almost immediately it split into three organizations, each claiming to be the 'real' party. Meanwhile, the movement began to spread across New York

1 H. L. Sumner, 'Citizenship', in J. R. Commons et al., *History of Labour in the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1918), pp. 169–332 at p. 216; W. A. Sullivan, 'Did Labor support Andrew Jackson?' *Political Science Quarterly* 62, 4 (1947), pp. 569–80 at pp. 574–6; L. H. Arky, 'The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations and the formation of the Philadelphia Workingmen's Movement', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 76, 2 (1952), pp. 142–76 at pp. 173, 176; B. Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800–1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

State, including into Albany and Buffalo, attracting the support of many farmers in those more rural areas. However, internal dissension caused the movement to fizzle out in 1834.² Despite these failures, workers in other parts of the United States tried to establish parties under a variety of names, although all their attempts ultimately failed. It was not only internal differences of opinion that contributed to this, for so, too, did slander and the disastrous influence of 'professional politicians of the old parties, who worm themselves into the new party, either for the purpose of controlling it, or else of breaking it up before it becomes a menace'.³

A second cycle of party formation began in Europe from the 1860s onwards, the same period in which anarchism flourished – a clear indication that the socialist movement in all its manifestations was on the rise.⁴ Some countries had already seen precursors of socialist parties. In England and Wales, the Chartist movement (1838–57) attracted the support of millions in its campaign for suffrage for 'every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for a crime'.⁵ In Switzerland, in 1838, the Grütli Association was founded, originally as a social and educational circle, and gradually moved to the left. In Paris, during the Revolution of 1848 secret societies formed clubs, and many artisans and wage-earners became members; such clubs became precursors of political parties. In Germany at the same time, the Arbeiterverbrüderung (Workers' Fraternization) came into being as a reform-oriented organization, with about 15,000 members at the height of its brief existence (1848–9). And in Norway, for a few years after 1848, the so-called Thrane movement emerged as that country's first political mass organization of workers and peasants.⁶ A little later in Latin America,

2 F. T. Carlton, 'The Workingmen's Party of New York City, 1829–1831', *Political Science Quarterly* 22, 3 (1907), pp. 401–15; S. Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 201–16.

3 Sumner, 'Citizenship', p. 326.

4 Anarchists and syndicalists, too, occasionally founded their own political party, though never with success. Examples include the Austrian Radikale Arbeiter-Partei (1880–4), the Dutch Socialistische Partij (1918–28), and the Spanish/Catalan Partido Sindicalista/Partit Sindicalista (1932–9). See, for example, A. Staudacher, *Sozialrevolutionäre und Anarchisten. Die andere Arbeiterbewegung vor Hainfeld. Die Radikale Arbeiter-Partei Österreichs (1880–1884)* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1988); R. Blom, *De oude Socialistische Partij van Harm Kolthek. Ontstaan, opkomst en ondergang van een 'libertair-socialistische' partij (1918–1928)* (Delft: Eburon, 2007); Á. M. de Lera, *Ángel Pestaña, retrato de un anarquista* (Barcelona: Editorial Argos, 1978).

5 G. Claeys (ed.), *The Chartist Movement in Britain, 1838–1850*, 6 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001).

6 E. Gruner, *Die Arbeiter in der Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bern: Francke, 1968), pp. 468–504; E. Gruner, *Arbeiterschaft und Wirtschaft in der Schweiz, 1880–1914* (Zurich: Chronos, 1988);

similar organizations were set up, including the Gran Círculo de Obreros de México (Great Circle of Workers of Mexico), which not only pursued educational goals but also operated as a savings fund and, together with mutual societies in Mexico City, published the *El Socialista* newspaper.⁷

1863–1914

The earliest socialist party was the Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein (General German Workers' Association, ADAV), founded in 1863 on the initiative of Ferdinand Lassalle.⁸ A whole series of other organizations of the same kind soon followed across Europe and beyond. Table I.1 gives an impression, though it is by no means complete, since the origins of the parties were often complex. Mergers and splits, followed by new mergers and splits, made early developments in many countries rather confusing.⁹

The relationship between unions and party was usually close.¹⁰ In several cases it was the trade union movement itself that took the initiative to set up the party, while in other cases the party encouraged the formation of a national confederation of trade unions. Seen in that light, it is probably no coincidence that many parties emerged during the long economic downturn of 1873–95. In situations of economic crisis, the trade union wing of the labour movement can only rarely do very much, and the need for direct political action becomes more compelling.

P. Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); M. Quarck, *Die erste deutsche Arbeiterbewegung. Geschichte der Arbeiterverbrüderung 1848/49* (Leipzig: C. L. Hirschfeld, 1924); F. Balser, *Sozial-Demokratie, 1848/49–1863. Die erste deutsche Arbeiterorganisation 'Allgemeine Arbeiterverbrüderung' nach der Revolution* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1962); P. H. Noyes, *Organization and Revolution: Working-Class Associations in the German Revolutions of 1848–49* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); H. Koht, 'Die 48er Arbeiterbewegung in Norwegen', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* 2 (1912), pp. 237–74; K. Tønnesson, 'Popular protest and organization: the Thrane movement in pre-industrial Norway, 1849–1855', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 13, 2/3 (1988), pp. 121–39.

7 See John Mason Hart, Chapter 20, in Volume I, and C. Illades, *Conflict, Domination and Violence: Episodes in Mexican Social History*, trans. Philip Daniels (New York: Berghahn, 2017), pp. 17–20.

8 A. Herzig, *Der Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiter-Verein in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1979); T. Offermann, *Die erste deutsche Arbeiterpartei. Organisation, Verbreitung und Sozialstruktur von ADAV und LADAV 1863–1871* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2001).

9 An overview of twenty-eight movements can be found in M. van der Linden and J. Rojahn (eds.), *The Formation of Labour Movements 1870–1914: An International Perspective*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

10 G. Haupt, 'Socialisme et syndicalisme. Les rapports entre partis et syndicats au plan international: une mutation?' in M. Rebérioux (ed.), *Jaurès et la classe ouvrière* (Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1981), pp. 29–66.

Table I.1 Year of establishment of selected socialist and labour parties

Year	Region	Party
1863	Germany	Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein
1871	Denmark	Socialdemokratiet
1875	Germany	Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
	Portugal	Partido Socialista Português
1876	USA	Workingmen's Party of the United States
1878	Czech Lands	Sociálně Demokratická Strana Československá v Rakousku
1879	Spain	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
1880	Hungary	Magyarországi Általános Munkáspárt
1881	Netherlands	Sociaal-Democratische Bond
1885	Belgium	Belgische Werkliedenpartij/Parti Ouvrier Belge
1887	Norway	Det Forenede Norske Arbeiderparti
1888	Switzerland	Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz
1889	Austria	Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs
	Sweden	Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti
1891	Bulgaria	Bălgarska Sotsialdemokraticheska Partiya
1892	Italy	Partito Socialista Italiana
1893	Romania	Partidul Social-Democrat al Muncitorilor din România
	UK	Independent Labour Party
	Poland and Lithuania	Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy
1894	Netherlands	Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij
1896	Argentina	Partido Socialista
1897	Russian Empire	Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland
1898	Russia	Rossiiskaia Sotsial'demokraticheskaia Rabochaia Partiiia
1899	Finland	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue
1900	UK	Labour Representation Committee
1901	Australia	Australian Labor Party
	Japan	Shakai Minshutō
	USA	Socialist Party of America
1903	Serbia	Srpska Socijaldemokratska Partija
1905	France	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
1910	South Africa	Labour Party/Arbeidersparty
	Uruguay	Partido Socialista del Uruguay
1912	Ireland	Páirtí an Lucht Oibre
	Chile	Partido Obrero Socialista
1916	New Zealand	New Zealand Labour Party/Rōpū Reipa o Aotearoa
1918	UK	Labour Party
1933	Chile	Partido Socialista de Chile
1935	British Ceylon	Lanka Sama Samaja Party
1961	Canada	New Democratic Party/Nouveau Parti démocratique
1980	Brazil	Partido dos Trabalhadores

The early socialist parties differed greatly from one another, and their supporters were certainly not just wage labourers in the strict sense. Not infrequently the supporters comprised to a large extent independent artisans running small businesses, sharecroppers, farmers, or white-collar employees, while it was not unusual for teachers and other intellectuals to join as well. ADAV members were predominantly 'proletarian semi-independent labourers, small masters, domestic workers, journeymen working for small masters'.¹¹ Women were often excluded. The SPD that emerged from the ADAV in 1875 also to a large extent comprised self-employed artisans and small employers.¹² Its undisputed leader was August Bebel, who ran a small business producing handles for doors and windows; at one point his firm employed a foreman, six journeymen, and two apprentices. Similar observations can be made about other early 'labour parties'.¹³ There have been a few attempts in history to establish workers' parties composed purely of proletarians, but to little effect.¹⁴ There was also a lack of clarity as to what was actually meant by workers' interests: the short-term interests of different groups of workers are not usually the same even if their long-term interests are. In some parties, the German one, for example, such questions were the subjects of Marxist debate among senior party cadres; in other parties, such as the Belgian one, little consideration was given to theoretical matters, and it was largely practical considerations that played a role.

¹¹ Sh. Na'aman, *Lassalle* (Hanover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschichte, 1977), p. 683.

¹² Th. Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn: Dietz, 2000).

¹³ A pioneering essay was, of course, R. Michels, 'Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie. I. Parteimitgliedschaft und soziale Zusammensetzung', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 23, 2 (1906), pp. 471–556. Later attempts include C. Willard, *Les Guesdistes. Le mouvement socialiste en France (1893–1905)* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1965); S. Castillo, 'La implantación del PSOE hasta su IV congreso (1886–1894)', *Estudios de Historia Social* 8/9 (1979), pp. 197–206; V. V. Lozhkin, 'Sostav rabochikh sotsialdemokratov i ikh rol' v sozdanii leninskoi partii' [The composition of the Social-Democratic Workers and their role in the creation of the Leninist party], *Voprosy Istorii* [Questions of History] 7 (1983), pp. 64–80; H. Zwahr, 'Die Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands im regional-stadialen Vergleich (1875)', in *Der Konstituierungsprozess der sozialistischen Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland und Österreich* (Leipzig: Karl-Marx-Universität, 1984), pp. 20–40; B. Fieseler, 'The making of Russian female social democrats, 1890–1917', *International Review of Social History* 34, 2 (1989), pp. 193–226; H. Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd in de SDAP* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1989), pp. 789–821, 901–8.

¹⁴ One example is the Partito Operaio Italiano, set up in 1882. In 1892, it merged with the Partito dei Lavoratori Italiani, the precursor of the Partito Socialista Italiano, founded in 1895. See M. G. Meriggi, *Il Partito Operaio Italiano. Attività rivendicativa, formazione e cultura dei militanti in Lombardia (1880–1890)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985); E. Gianni, *Dal radicalismo borghese al socialismo operaista. Dai congressi della Confederazione Operaia Lombarda a quelli del Partito Operaio Italiano (1881–1890)* (Milan: Pantarei, 2012).

Almost all parties were part of a broad network of affiliated organizations: sports associations, women's clubs, organizations for nature lovers, consumer co-operatives, newspapers, theatre groups, and the like. In this way, for many adherents they also served as an alternative model to church-based organizations. Naturally, such parties also maintained close ties with the social democratic trade unions. In many cases the party served as an 'organic' core of the network, but in Great Britain, Spain, Italy, and elsewhere the subcultural organizations were less directly linked to the party. The network's benefit to party stability was the greater the more firmly it was oriented towards the party; it not only influenced its members in purely political respects, but also dominated their daily life in countless other ways. As a result, the ties between party and rank and file remained particularly strong. Theo Pirker aptly noted that German social democracy long 'withstood the most violent literary and factional strife, prevailed over breakaway factions, and carried out the most unlikely reunifications because the workers' movement was not merely contingent upon theory and ideology but was also an extensive network of associations and relationships between individuals and groups within and outside the working class'.¹⁵

The parties – many of which suffered severe repression – experienced very different fates. The Socialist Party of America remained weak compared with its many sister associations. Its influence peaked in 1912, when its candidate for the US presidency, Eugene V. Debs, took 6 per cent of the vote, and while it experienced a brief revival in the early 1930s the party never really broke through electorally. The question of why the socialist movement failed to take root in the world's most advanced capitalist nation was the subject of much debate throughout the twentieth century.¹⁶

Other parties, such as the Argentine one, had to contend with ever-new schisms, or managed to maintain their unity while accommodating very different movements, as in Austria. It is not entirely clear where such differences originated. Peretz Merchav has suggested that the explanation

15 Th. Pirker, 'Vom "Ende der Arbeiterbewegung"', in R. Ebbighausen and F. Tiemann (eds.), *Das Ende der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1984), pp. 39–51 at p. 45.

16 The debate began with W. Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1906). A survey of many later debates can be found in J. H. M. Laslett and S. M. Lipset (eds.), *Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism*, rev. edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Further discussion can be found in S. M. Lipset and G. Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), in K. Moody's review essay on this book in *Historical Materialism* 11, 4 (2003), pp. 347–62, and in R. Archer, *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

for the pursuit of unity in the Austrian case must be sought in a combination of two factors: first, the fact that the founding of the party in 1889 had put an end to a long period of controversy and division, and, secondly, that the party had to operate in an ethnic and political environment in which centrifugal forces were a constant threat.¹⁷

The new social democratic parties wanted to transform state power by ‘conquering’ the state apparatus and changing it into an instrument for socialist politics. Their policies were based on a combination of two elements: a basic programme (e.g., universal suffrage, decent social security) and the ultimate goal of socialism. Although most parties considered themselves revolutionary and Marxist, the ultimate goal usually played a minor role in their practical considerations, and for most of them there tended to be no strategy to ensure a logical and concrete link between the two elements. The parties usually considered their intended conquest of power as the historically inevitable outcome of continually increasing support from workers and associated classes. In this sense, it can be said that social democracy has never been predominantly revolutionary, although many supporters and opponents saw it differently at the time. When at the end of the wave of party formation the British Labour Party was founded, it adopted the idea of a basic programme but not the ultimate goal of revolution. Other labour parties identified themselves as ‘democratic socialist’ – either from their inception (New Zealand, 1916) or over a number of years (Australia after 1921). All such parties regarded themselves primarily as workers’ parties, that is, as political organizations focused on representing workers’ interests.

The weak connection between basic programme and ultimate goal could have very different consequences depending on the context in which the parties operated. With an ironic reference to Friedrich Nietzsche, the sociologist Max Weber, for example, accused the German party of a ‘Wille zur Ohnmacht’ – will to powerlessness. The party actively wished to avoid being in government because only thus could it preserve its identity as revolutionary while having no real intention of carrying out a revolution. ‘This situation caused its leaders to nestle the party in a kind of political ghetto existence for decades in order to avoid being contaminated by the goings-on of a bourgeois state mechanism.’¹⁸ In that sense the party had positioned itself within

17 P. Merchav, ‘Sozialdemokratie und Austromarxismus’, in D. Albers and F. Andreucci (eds.), *Der Weg der Arbeiterbewegung nach 1917* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1985), pp. 82–108 at pp. 83–4.

18 M. Weber, *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Schriften und Reden 1914–1918* [Max Weber Gesamtausgabe], vol. xv (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1984), p. 242.

capitalism, taking up station more or less at the centre of a spectrum running from integration to non-integration. Non-integration was certainly the position in tsarist Russia, while stronger integration was evident in France, where in 1899 the socialist Alexandre Millerand became minister of commerce in the Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet in a move that prompted international controversy.¹⁹

A milestone was reached when, in 1910, the Australian Labor Party formed the first majority government. The further integration of the party proceeded smoothly. Fearing a Japanese or Chinese invasion, it advocated a strengthening of the military apparatus, founded a military academy in 1911, and introduced compulsory military training for all males aged from twelve to twenty-five. 'Under these circumstances, the Labor Party was incorporated into the state institution and the parliamentary status quo.'²⁰

The wave of party-founding enabled, in 1889, the creation of the Socialist International (Second International). Consolidated from c. 1900,²¹ it is generally considered the successor to the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) (1864–76/7), which was subsequently named the First International. In the intervening years – years of severe economic depression – there had been attempts at cross-border collaboration, especially by anarchists, but they proved to be short-lived.²² Within international social democracy the German party was by far the most influential, although it was not the undisputed leader.²³

19 C. Pinzani, 'Il caso Millerand e il socialismo internazionale (1899–1901)', *Studi Storici* 6 (1965), pp. 665–707, and 7 (1966), pp. 71–95. An initial comparative analysis of factors conducive to integration can be found in M. van der Linden, 'The national integration of European working classes (1871–1914): exploring the causal configuration', *International Review of Social History* 33, 3 (1988), pp. 285–311.

20 R. Markey, 'Australia', in M. van der Linden and J. Rojahn (eds.), *The Formation of Labour Movements 1870–1914: An International Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), vol. 11, pp. 579–608 at 605. Compare the early analysis in V. G. Childe, *How Labour Governs* (London: Labour Publishing Co., 1923), esp. chs. 3–5.

21 G. Haupt, *Programm und Wirklichkeit. Die internationale Sozialdemokratie vor 1914*, Preface Ernest Labrousse (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1970), pp. 140–6.

22 G. Stiecklow, *Die bakunistische Internationale nach dem Haager Kongress, 1872 bis 1881: Ergänzungshefte zur Neuen Zeit*, 18 (1914); M. Nettel, 'Ein verschollener Nachklang der Internationale: The International Labour Union (London 1877–78)', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* 9 (1921), pp. 134–45; G. Haupt and J. Verdès, 'De la Première à la Deuxième Internationale. Les actes des congrès internationaux, 1877–1888: répertoire', *Le Mouvement social* 51 (1965), pp. 113–26; L. Valiani, 'Dalla prima alla seconda Internazionale (1872–1889)', *Movimento Operaio* 6 (1954), pp. 3–73, reprinted in *Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli* 42 (2008), pp. 369–435; M. G. Meriggi, 'Les relations internationales sans l'Internationale. Réflexions sur les pas de Georges Haupt', *Cahiers Jaurès* 203 (2012), pp. 83–100.

23 Opinions regarding the extent to which the German party served as 'the model' vary. See, for example, P. Nettel, 'The German Social Democratic Party 1890–1914 as

Most parties affiliated to the Second International wanted to participate in the state. Those parties pleading for abstention either left the Second International or were removed from it during its first phase, which ran roughly between 1889 and 1896–8. With hindsight the decision to participate is usually seen as the obvious thing to have done, but it was certainly not so at the time, as can be deduced from the continued presence of sometimes strong anti-parliamentarian currents in the labour movement, such as the syndicalist movements discussed in Volume I.

Why, over time, did significant sections of the working classes not feel at home with anarchism and syndicalism, or ceased to feel at home with it, and why did they become supporters of parliamentary participation? In countries where the working class were still few in number or where only a few of the lower classes had the active or passive right to vote, it seemed impossible to secure a parliamentary majority within a reasonable period. It was therefore obvious that anti-parliamentary feeling would predominate, so it is not surprising that abstentionism was popular in countries with a low level of proletarianization, such as Russia, or countries with a very narrow electorate, such as Argentina and Italy until 1912.²⁴

1914–1945

The outbreak of the First World War on 28 July 1914 was a traumatic experience for the young socialist movement. Socialists in Germany, France, and Great Britain willingly participated in the military efforts of their governments, but in Russia delegates from both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks walked out of the Duma in protest when they were informed that their country had joined the conflict. Meanwhile, in Italy the party journal *Avanti!* applauded the behaviour of its Russian comrades. It was clear that the process of national integration had progressed much further in some countries than in others. The Second International collapsed.

Nonetheless, even in those countries where parties supported the war, despite what has been claimed, especially for Germany, there was no

a political model', *Past and Present* 30 (1965), pp. 65–95; G. Haupt, 'Model Party: The Role and Influence of German Social Democracy in South-East Europe', in G. Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism, 1871–1914*, trans. P. Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 48–80; J. Rojahn, 'War die deutsche Sozialdemokratie ein Modell für die Parteien der Zweiten Internationale?', *IWK* 27 (1991), pp. 291–302.

²⁴ R. Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia nel movimento socialista italiano. Saggio di scienza sociografico-politica* (Rome: Fratelli Bocca, 1908), pp. 156–66; W. Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), p. 115.

widespread enthusiasm for it among the working class. The image of proletarian enthusiasm for war was created mainly by a small number of pronouncements by senior Social Democratic Party officials, but new research using local newspapers and other regional sources reveals an attitude among German social democrats at odds with that image. To a large extent, dejection and despair predominated. In general, workers and the lower middle class accepted the war but also feared what was to come. The leaders might not have 'betrayed' their followers as has often been suggested, for the majority of the rank and file thought the war unavoidable; but, on the other hand, the social democratic movement had not suddenly and inexplicably become a band of ferocious nationalists. Clearly, things were more complex than that.²⁵

Not only did the war lead to countless deaths, it also had unspeakable consequences for the living conditions of Europe's working classes. The Russian October Revolution seemed to offer an alternative – which was why communist parties were founded in many countries and why they proved to be attractive both to social democrats and to syndicalists, resulting in quite large parties in Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, and Germany.²⁶ In certain cases entire social democratic parties joined the new Communist International. The Norwegian Workers' Party (Det Norske Arbeiderpartiet, DNA) joined briefly (1919–23); in 1920, the Indonesian Social Democratic Association became the first communist party in Asia (the Communist Union of the Indies, Perserikatan Komunis di Hindia); while the Chilean Socialist Workers Party (Partido Obrero Socialista, POS) became the Communist Party of Chile in 1922.²⁷

The communist competition had a major impact on the further development of social democratic parties, and from that time onwards social democratic parties would be regarded as the 'right wing' of the socialist movement,

25 W. Kruse, *Krieg und nationale Integration. Eine Neuinterpretation des sozialdemokratischen Burgfriedensschlusses 1914/15* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1993); J. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); E. Ringmar, "'The Spirit of 1914': A Redefinition and a Defence", *War in History* 25, 1 (2018), pp. 26–47.

26 In some countries, the left wing of their social democratic parties had split from the main party before the October Revolution and then became communist parties after 1917. They included the 'Narrow Socialists' (Tesni Socialisti) in Bulgaria (founded in 1903) and the Sociaal Democratische Partij (SDP) in the Netherlands (founded in 1909). In Great Britain, the Communist Party was created by the merger of a number of older factions outside the Labour Party.

27 On the factors that might explain the relative success of early communist parties, see Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 85–94.

'identified, in word and in deed, with effective accommodation to the capitalist socioeconomic system'.²⁸ Universal male suffrage had long been the movement's principal immediate goal. It had been introduced in certain countries even before 1914, and by 1920 – with the help of agrarian allies or the First World War – had finally been established in all those countries in which social democratic parties were active.²⁹ Universal male suffrage – often quickly followed by votes for women – allowed the social democrats, following the turbulent pre-revolutionary years of 1918–23, to identify themselves definitively with parliamentary democracy. They therefore now pursued electoral majorities, and so began increasingly to focus on the middle classes.

This development made new strategic choices inevitable. As long as the social democratic parties were in opposition, the weak connection between basic programme and ultimate goal was never a pressing problem. But now they were confronted with the question of what to do if they could form a government. Finding the answer to what had become a burning question was made even more difficult by the economic depression of the interwar years. The three Swedish minority governments of the 1920s (1920, 1921–3, 1924–6) despaired:

Despite their efforts to fashion a more humane social policy to relieve the worst miseries of the unemployed, the social democrats also assumed that industry could only take up the slack in the labor market if substantial wage reductions were achieved across the board. Nor did they question the hallowed principles of holding government spending to a minimum and of achieving balanced budgets.

This reflected their leaders' ambivalence:

They accepted the Marxist critique of capitalism's 'irrationality' at the macroeconomic level but at the same time they strove in practice to restore a 'harmonious' capitalist economy in which presumably all resources, including labor, are efficiently allocated.³⁰

A similar sense of confusion prevailed in the first two British Labour governments (1924 and 1929–31) and the German coalition government headed by

28 G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy: The Great Transformation: 1945 to the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 20.

29 G. Therborn, 'The rule of capital and the rise of democracy', *New Left Review* 1, 103 (1977), pp. 3–41.

30 W. Higgins, 'Ernst Wigforss: the renewal of social democratic theory and practice', *Political Power and Social Theory* 5 (1985), pp. 207–50 at p. 216.

the social democrat Hermann Müller (1928–30). There was no clear perspective, although in a number of cases social reforms were achieved.

Lack of perspective became acutely problematic towards the end of the 1920s, when two major challenges confronted the movement: the long economic downturn, which began in 1929 and led to unprecedented unemployment; and the emergence of fascism. As the Wall Street Crash had its effect, there was growing awareness that an alternative economic policy was needed. First, it was thought that the disorderly nature of unbridled capitalist competition needed to be replaced by a systematic planned economy. This view was inspired not only by the longstanding debate on nationalizing essential companies, but also by the, apparently successful, implementation of five-year plans in the Soviet Union. Secondly, supporters increasingly believed in anti-cyclical economic intervention by the state – though often attributed exclusively to Keynes' *General Theory* (1936), that opinion prevailed among a number of other economists (social democrats as well as others) around 1930–2.³¹

The advance of fascism was a second problem. After the March on Rome in 1922, Mussolini had shown how disastrous mastery by the extreme right could be, and yet fascism was now advancing internationally. At the same time, strong communist parties had emerged in some of the countries threatened, including Germany and Czechoslovakia. Were socialists supposed to fight with the communists against the fascists, or fight both fascists and communists because of their anti-parliamentary character? Since the October Revolution the attitude towards the communists had been a repeated source of disagreement among social democrats, and for a brief time (1921–3) two 'internationals' co-existed, one (also called the London International) opposed to collaboration with the communists, the other (the 'Two-and-a-Half International' or Vienna International) in favour of it. After the Communist International had rejected collaboration, the two wings merged in 1923 to form the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), which was dominated by the German SPD. With the rapid rise of Nazism from around 1930, pressure on the LSI and the Comintern to work together increased, but co-operation was difficult to effect and succeeded in only

31 See, for example, K.-G. Landgren, *Den 'nya ekonomien' i Sverige*. J. M. Keynes, E. Wigforss, B. Ohlin och utvecklingen 1927–39 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell, 1960); G. Garvy, 'Keynes and the economic activists of pre-Hitler Germany', *Journal of Political Economy* 83, 2 (1975), pp. 391–405; M. Schneider, *Das Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm des ADGB. Zur gewerkschaftlichen Politik in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1975); C. G. Uhr, 'Economists and policymaking 1930–1936: Sweden's experience', *History of Political Economy* 9, 1 (1977), pp. 89–121.

a few countries. In Germany, an anti-fascist alliance proved impossible, which both there and in the Netherlands led to left-wing schisms within social democracy,³² and to the establishment in 1932 of an embryonic international, sometimes called the London Bureau.

In the Global South, non-communist socialism was given powerful impetus during the crisis years. In 1932, exceptional events occurred in Chile, where a group of young socialists, together with certain army cadres, deposed President Juan Esteban Montero's government in a *coup d'état* and proclaimed the 'Socialist Republic of Chile'. Their republic introduced a number of social reforms, but encountered opposition from the Communist Party, which accused it of being 'militarist'. The coup collapsed after just over three months, overturned in a counter-coup. The two main leaders – briefly exiled to Easter Island – concluded:

that their greatest weakness had been the lack of a large political party upon which they could have relied when opposition arose. They felt that if such a party had existed the army would not so easily have overturned their government. They vowed that upon their return to Chile they would work to unite the many small reform parties into one great Socialist Party. The next time they rose to power it would be as a result of the strength of this party, through peaceful means. No more would they rely upon the fickle military.³³

In the following year, they set up the Socialist Party of Chile, with the young Salvador Allende as a co-founder, a man who would play an important role in international socialism some four decades later.

In the colonial world, socialist (and communist) movements have always had close links with nationalist movements. That became very clear in South Asia, where in addition to communist parties non-communist socialist organizations soon emerged, helped by the major crisis of 1929 onwards. In British Ceylon, the economy was based largely on rubber, tea, and coconut plantations and was dependent on exports. When exports declined, mass unemployment, famine, and a malaria epidemic were the result. Because the trade unions could not turn the tide by their efforts alone, a number of British-educated intellectuals founded the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1935, which soon gained a fairly wide following.

32 The German Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (SAP), founded in 1931, and the Dutch Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij (OSP), founded in 1932.

33 J. R. Thomas, 'The Socialist Republic of Chile', *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 6, 2 (1964), pp. 203–20 at p. 220. A useful attempt at an analysis can be found in L. C. Salas, *La República Socialista del 4 de junio de 1932*, 2nd edn (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones de la Biblioteca Clodomiro Almeyda, 2012).

Socialist ideas became fashionable within the Indian National Congress (INC), a broad conglomeration of political movements that has existed since 1885. The Congress Socialist Party was founded in 1934, as a caucus that itself consisted of a broad spectrum of ideologies and which soon established fraternal relations with the LSSP. But the entire INC also moved in the direction of social democracy, when its 1936 session not only demanded the convening of a constituent assembly, but also advocated land reform, equal rights for men and women, and better living conditions for workers.

In Germany, Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 could most probably have been prevented had social democrats and communists formed a united front. Instead, the two sides proved bitter enemies and it was not until 1934 – by which time it was too late for Germany – that an international rapprochement gradually took place between social democrats and communists. Their collaboration took the form of popular fronts – anti-fascist coalitions that included liberals and sometimes even conservatives – giving rise to left-wing governments in France in 1936–8 and Spain in 1936–9. However, they were short-lived owing to the global economic crisis, mutual acrimony, and, in the Spanish case, repression.

The consolidation of national socialism obviously had enormous repercussions for the international labour movement in general and for social democracy in particular – initially in Europe, but before long elsewhere as well. The German party, the most influential in the LSI, disintegrated, as did part of the London Bureau after 1936–7. Over the next seven years more left-wing parties were illegalized or repressed, first in Austria (1934) and then in much of the rest of Europe. Indeed, in only a few countries – Britain and Sweden, for example – did left-wing parties even remain legal.

For the Swedish party, communist competition played a relatively small role, so that Swedish socialists were able to focus on the economic problem.³⁴ In 1932, they formed a coalition government with the Agrarians and became the first party to develop proto-Keynesian policies. The traditional approach, which had considered capital an adversary from which progressively greater concessions were to be forced, made way for a political practice that pursued systematic co-operation with that very capital.

From a social democratic perspective Keynesianism offered four major advantages. First, it seemed to allow control over the economy from above

34 Although they were also involved in other aspects and developed, *inter alia*, an illiberal and negative eugenics policy. See L. Lucassen, 'A brave new world: the left, social engineering, and eugenics in twentieth-century Europe', *International Review of Social History* 55, 2 (2010), pp. 265–96.

through the state. Reconciliation between socialism and the market became possible by managing the unemployment rate and the distribution of income, notwithstanding that private ownership of the means of production was to continue. Secondly, it justified an egalitarian outlook by showing that increasing consumption among broad segments of the population stimulated economic growth. Thirdly, it provided for rapid capital accumulation and reconciliation between entrepreneurs and workers. Fourthly, it enabled governments to spend part of the social product on expanding social services without disrupting the economic balance. This proto-Keynesian policy laid the foundation for the Swedish welfare state.

1945–1973: *Les Trente Glorieuses*

The defeat of fascism in 1945 heralded major changes worldwide. Three aspects are worth highlighting here: the changes in advanced capitalist countries; the expansion of the ‘communist’ world; and the breakthrough of anti-colonial movements in the Global South.

Changes in Advanced Capitalist Countries

Following the defeat of the Axis Powers, parliamentary democracy was reintroduced to Italy, Japan, and the countries of the former Third Reich. The social democratic parties in the liberated countries were now able to develop again – although in east European countries they were soon integrated into the Stalinist system by forced mergers with the ruling communist parties.³⁵ In a number of cases, the traditional parties also succeeded in partly reviving their subcultural networks. The economic context differed drastically from the interwar years: the Fordist compromise, focused on boosting labour productivity leading to higher profit margins for corporate industry and higher wages for employees, now became dominant – with the United States as its greatest advocate. The social Keynesianism of the Swedish party was widely imitated, and had far-reaching ideological consequences.

As early as 1944 the Swedes had understood the theoretical consequence of the new policy. They replaced their old programme from 1920 (which

35 P. Heumos, ‘Arbeitschaft und Sozialdemokratie in Ostmitteleuropa 1944–1948’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 13, 1 (1987), pp. 22–38; A. W. M. Gerrits, ‘The social democratic tradition in East Central Europe’, *East European Politics and Societies* 16, 1 (2002), pp. 54–108, esp. pp. 87–93, 97–8; G. Pritchard, ‘Social Democracy in Post-War East Germany’, in J. Callaghan and I. Favretto (eds.), *Transitions in Social Democracy: Cultural and Ideological Problems of the Golden Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 93–106.

mentioned 'exploitation' and 'class struggle') with a text more predicated on the party's participation in government. The Danish revision to the programme in 1945 derived most of its inspiration from Keynesianism and Beveridge's social liberalism. The Austrian party discarded Marxist elements in 1958 and the Swiss, German, and Dutch parties followed suit a year later, a step that only a few parties, including the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO), were not yet willing to take. The practical and theoretical adoption of social Keynesianism thus dramatically changed the nature of most social democratic parties. They had now reconciled themselves to the necessity of capital and had abandoned the idea of any ultimate goal of socialism beyond capitalism. In Sweden, for example, the discussion about the 1944 programme was 'the last time that leading members of the party used the term "socialism"'.³⁶

None of that means that social democratic parties had become 'normal' bourgeois parties. On the one hand, they retained their own subculture, which made them socially and culturally different from many other parties. And on the other hand, they continued to have a characteristic 'commitment to strengthening centralized mechanisms of political administration as a key method of improving the organization of society'.³⁷ In that respect social democracy still differed both from liberalism (which emphasizes the market and voluntary agreements) and from conservatism (which highlights primary groups, direct contacts between fellow citizens, etc.).

Capitalism's unprecedented growth until the early 1970s, social Keynesian policy's corresponding apparent 'fairness', and the cohesion of social democratic networks generally ensured reasonable success for the social democratic parties, despite their diverging fates. As late as 1961 in Canada, after a number of electoral disappointments a new social democratic party emerged from the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, called the New Democratic Party.

Communism and Anti-Colonialism

After the Second World War, 'real existing socialism' spread elsewhere, to eastern Europe, China, Indochina, and Cuba. Because the economies of the Soviet Union and its allies grew markedly for several decades, a clear global alternative to capitalism seemed to have emerged: the centrally planned

36 R. Meidner, 'Why did the Swedish model fail?', *Socialist Register* (1993), pp. 211–28 at p. 212.

37 H. Kitschelt, 'The Socialist Discourse and Party Strategy in West European Democracies', in Ch. Lemke and G. Marks (eds.), *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 191–227 at p. 199.

economy.³⁸ This development had at least two important consequences. First, it promoted the construction of welfare states in western Europe, Japan, and elsewhere because capitalism, too, had to show its ‘social’ face.³⁹ And, secondly, a rivalry developed between social democracy and communism which would have major consequences in the Global South and elsewhere.

In the case of the latter, it is important to realize that the social democratic parties – especially in countries with colonial possessions – had already come to an accommodation with colonialism at a very early stage. As Fritjof Tichelman noted:

The general idea was that after the socialist revolution in Europe, the backward peoples would be liberated from capitalist exploitation. Up to the Stuttgart congress of 1907 [of the Second International] this idea was combined with moderate forms of anticolonialism. After Stuttgart the centre of gravity shifted towards reform of actual colonial policies and practices. Direct anticolonial action was generally not considered . . . Most socialists could hardly envisage an active historical role of the colonial masses. Traditional revolt meant regression and nationalist movements represented the interests of potential bourgeoisies.⁴⁰

As a result, social democratic parties after 1945 had little faith in the rapidly emerging African and Asian anti-colonial movements. These movements found a more sympathetic ear in communist parties and countries, and were often supported by them in practical ways. By contrast, social democratic governments played an active and bloody role in attempts to preserve colonial empires, for example, in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia, 1947–9), British Malaya (1948–57), and French Algeria (1954–62). Also, the fact that Labour Zionists – under the patronage of the British Empire (Palestine War, 1947–9) – were crucial in establishing the State of Israel implied, to many, a link between social democracy and colonialism.

38 The Soviet threat was, however, relatively short-lived. The USSR was a distinctive social formation without endogenous dynamics, and its stagnation and downfall were inevitable. See, for example, F. Füredi, *The Soviet Union Demystified: A Materialist Analysis* (London: Junius Publications, 1986); H. H. Ticktin, *Origins of the Crisis in the USSR* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015 [1992]).

39 The perceived communist threat can, of course, only partly explain the rise of the welfare state. Such ideas had a much earlier genesis. In 1909, the British Labour Party’s Poor Law Commission published a minority report that G. D. H. Cole described as ‘the first full working out of the conception and policy of the Welfare State – more comprehensive . . . than the Beveridge Report of 1942, which in many respects reproduced its ideas’: G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1953–60), vol. III, Pt 1, p. 207.

40 F. Tichelman, ‘Socialist “internationalism” and the colonial world’, in F. L. van Holthoorn and M. van der Linden (eds.), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 87–108 at p. 92.

When after 1945 many of the former European colonies gained independence within just a short period, this naturally had political consequences. In the 1950s and 1960s, no major social democratic parties were established in the Global South where, instead, communist parties flourished in countries that also developed their own variants of socialism, often with roots in the anti-colonial struggles of the interwar period and generally less closely linked to labour movements than had been the case in Europe and the Americas.

From the 1940s onwards a variety of 'Arab socialism' spread from Syria under the motto 'One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission'. Initially at least partly inspired by dissident communism in Yugoslavia, the movement's aim was the pursuit of a renaissance (*ba'ath*) of pan-Arabic society under the leadership of a vanguard party; it accomplished important social reforms and found support in large parts of the Middle East.⁴¹ However, the despotic forms it sometimes assumed (in Iraq, for example, under Saddam Hussein, and in Syria under Bashar al-Assad) have greatly compromised the movement's international prestige.

In a number of African countries, including Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, and Tanzania, variants of an 'African socialism' emerged in the post-independence 1960s. Its political current carried with it a socialism based not on western individualism but on the communalism of traditional African society, in which men and women managed economic resources jointly. The realization of such a system of solidarity could best be achieved through a one-party state apparatus. Critics have suggested that 'African socialism' often amounted to no more than rhetoric and that the practical social and economic policies in the countries concerned differed little from the more market-oriented policies in 'non-socialist' countries such as Nigeria or Ivory Coast.⁴² Whatever the case may be, all these experiments stalled in the 1970s, compromised by the deteriorating global economic climate.

The growing self-confidence of socialist movements in former colonies in the 1950s and 1960s became evident in the refusal of the Asian Socialist Conference (1953–65) to join the social democratic Socialist International.

The New Left and Left-Wing Socialism

In the advanced capitalist countries, the tempestuous economic growth seen in the 1950s and 1960s, which benefited integrated social democracy both electorally and politically, created a historically unprecedented high standard

41 N. Cigar, 'Arab socialism revisited: the Yugoslav roots of its ideology', *Middle Eastern Studies* 19, 2 (1983), pp. 152–87.

42 J. Mohan, 'Varieties of African socialism', *Socialist Register* (1966), pp. 220–66.

of living among large segments of the wage-dependent population. Rapid increases in purchasing power also led to important socio-cultural and psychological changes as an entirely new type of individualism emerged. Women and young adults acquired an awareness of their role in society to which a second factor contributed: a dramatic expansion in higher education in all advanced capitalist countries after the Second World War. This tremendous growth had an important effect, which Michiya Shimbori, referring to Japan, has summarized as follows:

As a result of this rapid expansion in higher institutions, students became closer to the mass in terms of their quality as well as quantity. Their prospective careers became less promising; their social origins, their intellectual level, their cultural background, and the standards for teaching personnel were lowered. The relationship between professors and students was impersonalized. Less prestige and esteem were afforded; students lost their elite consciousness and they gained a feeling of affinity and identity with the mass. Greater power on the part of students was felt to result from their numbers. They became more sensitive to mass culture and less sensitive to academic culture.⁴³

The political consequences of this trend became clear towards the end of the 1950s. A youth movement emerged, especially among university students, but in some countries also among school pupils. The movement was driven by the dual motives of the pursuit of social justice and personal fulfilment. What triggered this movement varied between countries. The suppression of democratic movements in eastern Europe and of liberation movements in Western colonies played an important role, as did racial matters and the question of peace. The emergent women's movement was also a key factor. Because social democratic and communist parties in both East and West alike were strongly identified with the establishment, there was a clear need for a Third Way, which gave rise to the international New Left. Though both geographically and ideologically fragmented in its diversity, containing as it did elements of the Old Left, such as Trotskyists and Maoists, the New Left soon gained influence, albeit to varying degrees. Partly because of the revival of the New Left, the influence of older left-wing socialist parties increased too.

The radical socialist movement as a whole reached its apogee between 1966 and 1974, the most iconic event being the insurgency in France in May

43 M. Shimbori, 'Zengakuren: a Japanese case study of a student political movement', *Sociology of Education* 37, 3 (1964), pp. 229–53 at p. 233.

and June 1968. The students there were able to weaken state power, which in turn initiated the largest wave of strikes in France's history. Meanwhile in Argentina, radicalization took place more or less at the same time within the universities and the factories. The climax was reached with a workers' uprising in Córdoba in May 1969. In Italy, in the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969, workers and students forged a radical coalition. A large uprising in Karachi in 1972, during which part of the city became a liberated zone, was an overwhelmingly proletarian action, whereas the suppression of the military coup in Thailand in 1974 resulted largely from student resistance. However, the wave of protests was full of contradictions. Towards the end of the 1960s there were already signs of disintegration; the broad protest finally fell apart in the early 1970s, since many radical representatives were bent on building up competing revolutionary vanguard parties.

Nevertheless, the period of global resurgence in resistance ended with a bang, not a whimper. The Chilean elections of 1970 were won by the Unidad Popular (UP, Popular Unity), a broad coalition including the socialist and communist parties, which aimed at a 'peaceful transition to socialism' through the nationalization of key industries and agrarian reform. Salvador Allende, mentioned earlier as co-founder of the Socialist Party, became the first democratically elected socialist leader in Latin America. Due in part to opposition from the business community and parts of the state apparatus, as well as from the United States which used its power to manipulate the market to force a drop in the price of copper – Chile's most important export – the UP government was completely unable to make good on its policy intentions and lost popularity after just a few months. On 9 September 1973, a US-backed military coup put a violent end to this socialist experiment.⁴⁴

1973 to the Present

In advanced capitalist countries, the extended and propitious capital accumulation of the 1950s and 1960s dramatically altered public regard for the operating environment of the parties, gradually at first and then spectacularly from the early 1970s onwards. At least five major changes occurred. First, the

44 See, for example, J. Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile: From 1932 to the Fall of Allende* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); F. Larraín and P. Meller, 'The Socialist-Populist Chilean Experience, 1970–1973', in R. Dornbusch and S. Edwards (eds.), *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 175–221; M. González, *La Conjura. Los mil y un días del golpe*, 3rd edn (Santiago de Chile: Catalonia, 2013).

control national governments had over their economies was reduced by economic internationalization, as was manifested by the continuously growing importance of cross-border trade, migration, and capital transfers. Secondly, declining – and in some cases even stagnant or briefly negative – economic growth, first seen since 1945 during the Oil Crisis in 1973, considerably reduced the share of the social product available for redistribution. As a result, following the system's logic, painful cutbacks became inevitable. Thirdly, the class composition in highly developed capitalist countries changed. The proportion of the 'traditional' working class present in the labour force decreased progressively from the 1950s onwards, while 'new' groups of wage-dependents rapidly expanded. Fourthly, women and young adults had gained self-confidence and acquired a new awareness of their role in society. And, fifthly, the unforeseen and negative effects of economic growth, such as a dramatic rise in pollution, gradually became more obvious. An additional factor was probably that in many post-war societies a number of social democratic achievements were widely internalized and no longer regarded as 'typically social democratic'.

These changes carried over to the socialist movements, and if not with equal pace everywhere, nevertheless their general direction was clear. Social democracy was severely affected by it, because the socio-cultural and economic reversal toppled both 'pillars' of the social Keynesian stage, as the networks fell apart and social Keynesianism became less feasible. Even as *les trente glorieuses* drew to a close, social democratic networks began to disintegrate because the affiliated organizations collapsed or became autonomous – a process that penetrated a variety of fields. The traditions of communal song, drama, sports, and nature associations were forced into a battle against individualization and the new popular culture which they were bound to lose; the traditional pursuits lost touch with the younger generation, who exchanged their traditional repertoire for more modern practices, or entirely abandoned their direct association with the parties. The advent of television and the progressive concentration of daily newspapers and other sectors forced many social democratic media to choose between popularization and commercial ruin, leading to what has been called 'the death of the press' during the 1960s and early 1970s. The disappearance of other organizations from the social democratic network, such as youth groups, paralleled that trend. Overall, the social democratic foundations had crumbled considerably between the last years of the 1950s and the late 1970s. Sometimes party policy was partially responsible, as in Denmark, where the party deliberately furthered the dissolution of its own subculture.

The shifts in class structure changed the social composition of members and voters, who became more heterogeneous and middle class. Moreover, involvement decreased among the party's rank and file. In the late 1980s, a Norwegian expert observed: 'Today there is very little left of the "special character" of the Labour Party. The vitality previously found at its grass roots is no longer impressive. Its declining membership – as in other parties – prefer television at home to party education in the town hall.'⁴⁵ The consumer co-operatives, often social democracy's allies, either disintegrated (e.g., in the Netherlands and Germany) or progressively evolved into true capitalist companies (such as the Swedish KF, where the staff staged several wildcat strikes in the 1970s). The economic downturn also eroded links between parties and trade unions.⁴⁶ A telling rift opened in those parties where union members had automatically been party members: in 1987, the Swedish party decided to abolish the system, while the British Labour Party's decision in 1993 to end the union 'block vote' and a similar decision by the Canadian NDP in 2003 served the same purpose.

The other pillar that progressively collapsed was social Keynesianism. From the mid-1970s, the old policy of pursuing a 'top-down' redistribution lost much of its credibility. Full employment was now feasible only if there were major concessions to capital through a massive redistribution in capital's favour. If social democracy were to retain its role as a co-trustee of capitalism, albeit with a sense of social commitment, it would have to resort to unpopular measures (cutbacks, rationalization).

Although this was already an impressive list of problems, more awaited. An entire series of qualitative new political 'issues' emerged, ranging from the democratization movement and protests by young adults to the second wave of feminism and the question of the environment. These new themes – which were clearly sources of just as much concern and insecurity in other established political movements – revealed a field of problems for which no convincing answers were available. One indication of social democracy's helplessness is the rise of the separate 'green' political movements.

All the changes were interrelated, so that the social democratic parties faced a great many challenges that had to be met more or less simultaneously. They were forced to maintain their reputation as social reformers despite the progressively diminishing policy scope for 'nice things and good deeds'.

45 K. Heidar, quoted in S. Padgett and W. E. Paterson, *A History of Social Democracy in Postwar Europe* (London: Longman, 1991), p. 95.

46 Ch. Howell, 'The end of the relationship between social democratic parties and trade unions?', *Studies in Political Economy* 65 (2001), pp. 7–37.

Traditional centralism had to be reconciled with grassroots democratic movements, and feminism with the conventional androcentric culture. Moreover, the environmental movement needed to be taken seriously without abandoning the pursuit of economic growth, which was the condition for social redistribution in a capitalist context. Little wonder, then, that the tremendous weight of all these problems gave rise to widespread dissent and insecurity within social democracy.

In the midst of this period of confusion the composition of the social democratic 'family' changed. First, some of the more traditional parties were 'reinvented'. After a series of disastrous results at the ballot box, the French SFIO was dissolved in 1969 to be succeeded by the new Parti Socialiste (PS), which managed to recover sufficiently to win the French national election in 1981 under François Mitterrand. As president of France, however, Mitterrand failed to deliver on his promises, and the party plunged once more into prolonged decline. In Spain, Franco's dictatorship came to an end in 1975, and the PSOE could again play a public and active part in Spanish political life. The party often did well electorally and was in government for many years: 1982–96, 2004–11, and since 2018. In the Czech Republic, after the fall of communism in 1989 and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the party was re-established in 1993 as the Česká Strana Sociálně Demokratická (ČSSD, Czech Social Democratic Party). Electorally, it was initially very successful, but then support fell sharply (from 32.3 per cent of the popular vote in 2006 to 7.3 per cent in 2017). All these parties lacked a subcultural network and broke with Marxism, sometimes explicitly (as the PSOE did in 1979), and sometimes implicitly (as the PS did in the 1980s).

Secondly, new parties were established, especially in southern and eastern Europe. In 1973, the Portuguese Partido Socialista (PSP) was established in Germany with the support of the German SPD. After the Carnation Revolution of 1974, which brought an end to the authoritarian regime of Antonio Salazar and his followers that had governed Portugal since 1926, the PSP joined the political scene and contributed greatly to the de-radicalization of the revolutionary process.⁴⁷ In 1976, the party led the first constitutional centre-left government, and it remains an important political force in Portugal to this day. In Greece, following the collapse of the military dictatorship (1967–74), the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Panellenio

47 The influence of German and other organizations on the PSP is explored in A. Granadino, 'Between radical rhetoric and political moderation: the Portuguese PS and its international networks in the Carnation Revolution', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 29, 1 (2018), pp. 85–110.

Sosialistikó Kinima, PASOK) was founded in 1974 and soon became one of the country's two major parties.⁴⁸ In the wake of the Greek debt crisis and concomitant austerity measures, it faced electoral disaster (with support dropping from 43.9 per cent in 2009 to 4.7 per cent in early 2015). The party has since merged into a new political alliance, Kinima Allagis, the Movement for Change.

In eastern Europe, too, many new parties were formed after 1989, sometimes as a result of the re-establishment of parties that had long been underground or in exile, as in Latvia and Lithuania, sometimes through coalitions and mergers of several groups (Poland), and sometimes through the transformation of traditional communist parties or political schism (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania). The processes of party formation through alliances and schisms could be highly complex. In many countries, the new parties did well in elections at first – sometimes even very well – but their popularity declined after a time.⁴⁹ One extreme case was the Polish Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej), which managed to garner 41 per cent of the vote in 2001, but by 2015 found itself below the electoral threshold. Some east European parties were then and still are plagued by extensive corruption scandals, particularly those whose origins lie in traditional communist parties, with elites controlling parts of the economy. Moreover, these parties did not seem to have a convincing response to the post-2008 economic crisis.⁵⁰

And, finally, some parties disappeared, dramatically so in the case of Italy's PSI. While participating in governments dominated by the Christian Democrats in the 1960s and 1970s, the PSI essentially became absorbed into the system of clientelism and power-broking. Its collapse during the 1990s was attributable to that weakness: its power rested on 'a fragile network of interests bordering on criminality and illegality, dominated by the necessity of establishing consent around individual leaders and not supported by values and a sense of solidarity which might have silenced these interests'.⁵¹ The

48 M. Spourdalakis, *The Rise of the Greek Socialist Party* (London: Routledge, 1988).

49 For a comparative analysis of the early post-1989 period, see P. Gowan, 'The Post-Communist Socialists in Eastern and Central Europe', in D. Sassoon (ed.), *Looking Left: European Socialism after the Cold War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 143–76.

50 M. A. Vachudova, 'The Positions and Fortunes of Social Democratic Parties in East Central Europe', in M. Keating and D. McCrone (eds.), *The Crisis of Social Democracy in Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 47–67.

51 G. Sapelli, 'The Italian Left after 1989: Continuity and Transformation', in D. Sassoon (ed.), *Looking Left: European Socialism after the Cold War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 44–63 at pp. 47–8.

party's position was later assumed by the Partido Democrático, founded in 2007, whose origins lay in part in the former Partido Comunista Italiano (PCI).

The blurring of the profile of social democracy had a paradoxical consequence, in that after the 1970s the Socialist International (SI) grew explosively. While the number of affiliate members fluctuated between 34 and 39 during the first 25 years of its foundation in 1951, between 1977 and 2003 its membership grew from 39 to 105. The new members included organizations that would certainly not have been considered social democratic in previous years, such as the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA, People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN, Sandinista National Liberation Front), and the autocratic Democratic Action in Venezuela. In fact, the enormous expansion of the SI could be justified only by 'broadening' its political principles. The SI's 18th Congress (Stockholm 1989) adopted a new 'Declaration of Principles' that acknowledged the existence of 'differences' in members' 'cultures and ideologies', while also emphasizing that the SI's core values (peace, freedom, justice, and solidarity) 'originate in the labour movement, popular liberation movements, cultural traditions of mutual assistance, and communal solidarity in many parts of the world'.⁵² When the SI split in 2013 and a new Progressive Alliance was launched under the leadership of the German SPD – which regretted the fact that the SI also included undemocratic parties – the principles of that alliance, too, remained vague, making it possible for the US Democratic Party, the Indian Congress Party, and the African National Congress (ANC) to join.

Looking at the development of social democratic parties over the past century, in terms of electoral popularity the majority peaked between 1920 and 1989, as Table I.2 shows.

In the meantime, no other variants of socialism have managed to become more deeply entrenched, with left-wing socialist parties proving unable to benefit from the difficulties experienced by social democratic parties. Attempts to create an African socialism stalled in the 1970s, mainly but not solely owing to economic problems. Arab socialism paved the way for

52 See www.socialistinternational.org/congresses/xviii-stockholm/declaration-of-principles-of-the-socialist-international, last accessed 16 March 2021. See the analysis in M. van der Linden, 'A Case of Lost Identity? A Long View on Social Democracy Worldwide', in J. Callaghan and I. Favretto (eds.), *Transitions in Social Democracy: Cultural and Ideological Problems of the Golden Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 35–41.

Table I.2 Average parliamentary electoral results of social democratic and labour parties, 1920–2019

	1920–9	1930–9	1940–9	1950–9	1960–9	1970–9	1980–9	1990–9	2000–9	2010–19
Australia	45.2	32.4	46.5	46.3	45.1	45.4	47.0	40.8	39.2	34.9
Austria	39.3	41.1	41.7	43.3	50.0	45.4	47.6*	37.3	33.7	25.0
Belgium	36.7	33.1	30.7	35.9	31.0	26.6	28.0	23.2	24.0	13.9
Brazil	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12.1	16.8	15.4
Canada	—	—	—	—	15.4	17.1	19.7	9.0	15.0	22.1
Denmark	34.5	43.9	39.1	40.2	39.1	33.6	30.9	36.0	26.8	25.7
Finland	27.4	37.5	25.7	25.3	23.4	24.5	25.4	24.4	23.0	17.8
France	19.1	20.2	20.9	15.1	15.9	21.0	35.3	34.6	38.8	18.4
Germany	29.3	21.2	29.2	30.3†	39.4†	44.2†	39.4†	36.9	31.9	23.1
Italy	24.7*	—	20.7	13.5	13.8	9.7	12.9	7.9**	—	22.1***
Netherlands	22.0	21.7	27.0	30.7	25.8	28.6	31.0	26.5	21.2	16.7
New Zealand	25.7	45.4	48.7	46.1	43.2	42.8	43.3	34.2‡	38.8‡	29.8‡
Norway	25.5	38.0	43.4	47.5	45.5	38.8	27.4	36.0	30.8	29.1
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	35.2	27.6	39.0	39.8	32.7
Spain	—	23.1	—	—	—	30.4	44.1	38.2	40.2	25.4
Sweden	36.0	43.8	48.8	45.6	48.4	43.7	44.5	39.8	37.5	30.0
Switzerland	25.5	27.5	27.4	26.5	25.1	24.1	20.7	20.9	21.4	18.1
United Kingdom	37.7	34.4	49.7*	46.3	46.1	39.1	29.2	38.7	38.0	32.9

* Only one election.

** Party disbanded in November 1994.

*** Result for the 'new' Democratic Party.

† Figures between 1950 and 1990 refer to West Germany.

‡ In 1993 the first-past-the-post electoral system was replaced by a mixed-member proportional voting system.

dictatorships, while Indian socialism lost out to the Hindu fundamentalists of the BJP, RSS, and Shiv Sena. The attempt by the rapidly radicalized regime of the initially moderate Hugo Chávez (Venezuela's president from 1999 to 2013) to establish 'the socialism of the twenty-first century' in Venezuela has now stalled due in part to economic recession.

This Volume

While Volume I focused primarily on attempts by socialists to negate the state, the main theme of this second volume is their efforts to transform state power without social revolution. The first section reconstructs the trajectories of social democracy from the 1870s until the present in the North Atlantic region, and what is immediately striking is how important in all cases was the relationship between trade unions and social democratic parties.

Germany is an excellent example. For many years until Hitler's victory in 1933, the German Social Democratic Party was by far the most influential worldwide. In Chapter 1, Stefan Berger and Thomas Welskopp describe its complex history from the working-class Jacobins and 'utopian socialists' of the early nineteenth century. From its beginnings in the 1860s until its persecution under the Anti-Socialist Laws of 1878–90, social democracy had close ties with much of the trade union movement. Owing in part to this symbiosis, between 1891 and 1918 its membership grew enormously, as did its electoral support, and it became the largest party in the German Reichstag. During the years of revolution between 1918 and 1919 it experienced a series of schisms that eventually made it possible for the National Socialists to seize power, who then brutally repressed all leftist organizations. The antagonism between social democrats and communists had further effects after the Second World War when the division of Germany meant that the East German party was forced to merge with the Communist Party while the West German social democrats opted to support social Keynesianism and the Cold War, finally rejecting Marxism for good in 1959. The social democrats were even in government in West Germany from 1966 to 1982, and subsequently peaked again in 1998, when Gerhard Schröder was elected chancellor from 1998 to 2005, after which they lost electoral support.

Social democracy in Austria had close ties to its German counterpart. Founded in 1889 with trade union support, the party soon managed to gain considerable influence. Helmut Konrad (Chapter 2) places its growth in the context of the Habsburg Empire's ethnic diversity, which helped party

intellectuals in their debates on the 'national question' to develop home-grown theories that subsequently became known as 'Austromarxism'. With the collapse of the Habsburg Empire at the end of the First World War, and after various 'revolutions' had taken place, the Austrian party had a chance to leave its political mark on the country for two years. Opposition gathered force, however, although 'Red Vienna' survived until 1934 as a global model of left-wing municipal policy. After the fascist repression that continued until 1945, the party once again took on an important domestic role, but it was not until Bruno Kreisky was elected president in 1970 that the party regained a clearer international profile. Since the turn of the millennium, the hegemony of the social democrats seems to have finally ended.

The Swedish party is often regarded as the quintessential case of social democracy. Jenny Andersson (Chapter 3) outlines three periods. During the first, after its foundation in 1889, alliances of trade unions and other social movements emerged to form a mass party with a network of small savings societies, friendly societies, co-operatives, and mutual aid associations. There followed a period of functional socialism, in which the central role was played by household and welfare state consumption in a mixed economy. The third period includes the advanced welfare state that came after 1945, in which the party considered high levels of social spending as representing a mature form of socialism and also as having changed capitalist culture – those years represented a high point. Since the 1980s, the party has joined the Third Way, its relationship with the trade union movement has deteriorated, and its ties with its constituents have weakened.

Developments in Great Britain were unlike those in central and northern Europe. The unions initially sympathized with the Liberal Party, with only relatively small socialist groups making themselves heard in the final decades of the nineteenth century. As John Callaghan shows in Chapter 4, the decision of the Trades Union Congress in 1900 to set up a Labour Representation Committee had little doctrinal significance and it was not until 1918 that Labour adopted a political programme. During the interwar years, the party recorded a number of electoral successes and was in government several times, while the influence of socialist ideas grew. Then, after the party participated in a Conservative-led coalition government, its historical apogee followed in the years 1945–51. Important social reforms in the fields of housing and health care were pushed through and – however reluctantly – the South Asian colonies were granted their independence. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Labour Party was in office a few more times, but 'disorientation'

grew and a long period in power followed (1997–2010), during which neo-liberal reforms were implemented and the war in Iraq supported. Those years of ‘New Labour’ coincided with the greatly diminished influence of socialism and the trade unions within the party which a brief left-wing revival under Jeremy Corbyn failed to halt.

In addition to the ‘social question’, the ‘nationality question’ had a key influence on the design of social democratic politics. We have already seen this with the Austrian party, but it was a feature of many other movements too, and in the Caucasus region Georgia illustrates the point very well. According to Ronald G. Suny (Chapter 5), social democracy emerged in that part of the Russian Empire in 1890 as a counterweight to nationalists who were largely associated with the Georgian nobility and populists who sprang from the intelligentsia. The initially small group of socialists developed to become a formidable force and soon became the country’s national liberation movement, based on an alliance between workers and peasants. The Mensheviks were in power from May 1918 until February 1921, but despite managing to establish a democratic constitutional political system they were unable to create either economic stability or physical security. The Red Army invaded in early 1921 and by April of that year all the south Caucasus had come under communist rule.

In 1897, a few years after social democracy emerged in Georgia, the tsarist empire saw the foundation of the General Jewish Workers’ Bund, which Jack Jacobs (Chapter 6) examines in both the Russian Empire and Poland. Social and economic desires were central to this anti-Zionist movement, in which incidentally women played a large part. However, those were not the only considerations, and even more important was the pursuit of national cultural autonomy for Jews. After a few detours, the organization joined the Labour and Socialist International in 1931. During the Nazi era many Bundists were murdered. On occasions, they had played heroic roles in the resistance, such as during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943, but after the close of the Second World War many of the Bund’s remaining supporters emigrated, eventually becoming united in a World Coordinating Committee. However, since the 1970s that organization has led an increasingly dormant existence.

The second section discusses social democratic trajectories in Australia, the Americas, and Asia. The settler colony in Australia led the way. In Chapter 7, Frank Bongiorno and Sean Scalmer describe how the Australian trade unions formed a Labor Party in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and how in 1910 the party won majority representation in the national parliament; it was the first workers’ party anywhere to do so. The party survived schisms in 1916

and 1931 to govern throughout the 1940s, suffered another split with the onset of the Cold War, and it was not until 1972 that its electoral fortunes recovered, leading to a series of successes that continued until 1996. However, during the past twenty-five years the party has become uncertain about its philosophy and purpose and is struggling with structural challenges, though it is in better condition than many of its sister parties.

Argentina was long regarded as a second Australia: sparsely populated, with a large European immigrant population and with vast expanses of agricultural land. After French and German émigrés had set up small socialist groups in the 1870s and 1880s, the founding congress of the Socialist Party of Argentina took place in 1896. Lucas Poy (Chapter 8) describes how, for several decades, this organization remained an important actor in the history of the country and its labour movement. From 1912, when the electoral system was radically reformed, until 1943 the party managed to hold its ground, despite economic depression, the short-lived dictatorship of José Uriburu, and electoral fraud. Peronism (1943–73), however, represented a serious setback for the party, causing multiple splits. Following the military dictatorship (1976–83), a laborious process of reunification took place, but the party subsequently ‘never found a relevant place in political life’.

In Brazil, as in Argentina, socialist groups had existed as early as the late nineteenth century, but for a long time they failed to gain mass support. Repression was one reason, and it was not until the 1970s, when militant sections of the trade union movement began to champion a workers’ party, that things changed. Founded in 1980, the Workers’ Party was the world’s first mass socialist workers’ party to be established after the Second World War. In a critical reconstruction, Marcelo Badaró Mattos (Chapter 9) shows what the Workers’ Party – which held the presidency from 2003 to 2016 – achieved in terms of social reform, how its compromises with capital led to a split, and how, for the time being, a ‘post-modern’ *coup d’état* put an end to the party’s success.

Although it too was a settler colony, the United States is an outlier. In Chapter 10, Leon Fink offers an expansive interpretation of social democracy in the United States, encompassing all serious non-revolutionary attempts to build a democratic political economy. He re-engages with nineteenth-century organizations such as the Knights of Labor and the People’s Party, which formed the background to the Socialist Party, founded in 1901. In the United States, *organized* social democracy never became as powerful as its counterparts in other parts of the world, but Fink argues that across the twentieth century there has nevertheless been a continuous undercurrent of

economic egalitarianism that showed a resurgence during the social movements of the 1960s and more recently in the presidential campaigns of Bernie Sanders.

Alexander Brown argues in Chapter 11 that in modern Japan, even more than in the United States, there is an antithesis between the traditional weakness of parliamentary social democracy and widespread support for social democratic policies. The first attempts to create a socialist movement were evident from about 1900, although from the late 1930s onwards draconian laws and government repression led to almost complete cessation of socialist activity. After the Second World War ended the Japanese Socialist Party was established, with Katayama Tetsu serving from 1947 as Japan's first socialist prime minister. Katayama's government proved to be short-lived, and his party was subsequently sidelined until Murayama Tomiichi became prime minister (June 1994–January 1996). Thereafter the party fell into decay at a national level, though it managed to gain some influence in many municipalities.

The third section explores experiments at the supra- and subnational levels. The Second International, founded in 1889, was perhaps the best-known supranational organization and brought together some thirty socialist and labour parties, most of them from Europe and the Americas. Jean-Numa Ducange (Chapter 12) discusses the German influence, hugely significant although not entirely dominant, and describes important strategic debates, such as reform versus revolution, the women's question, migration, ethnic and religious minorities, and colonialism. He refers to organizational practices and, of course, the shock felt when on the outbreak of the First World War an organization that had always considered itself peaceable simply fell apart. Reiner Tosstorff (Chapter 13) continues the narrative and describes the crisis of the Second International which resulted from the First World War and which, after the International had experienced all manner of vicissitudes, led to the emergence of the Labour and Socialist International (LSI). Tosstorff's reconstruction shows that, like its predecessor the Second International, the LSI struggled with an ambiguous relationship between its 'federation' and the parties that were affiliated to it. Tosstorff reveals how its uncertain position made the organization 'more defensive than proactive'. Formally dissolved in 1947, in essence the LSI had already disintegrated by 1940.

After the Second World War socialist parties in many former colonies were initially reluctant to forge alliances with the social democratic and labour parties in their colonial or former colonial metropolises. They met in separate Asian Socialist Conferences (in 1953 and 1956) and set up their own

organization with its headquarters in Rangoon. That organization also attempted to gain a foothold in Africa. Su Lin Lewis (Chapter 14) describes this coalition and discusses its earlier history. Lewis relates how it advocated equality of peoples and states and equality between women and men, campaigned for radical land reforms, supported anti-colonial liberation movements, and set its face against religious and ethnic nationalism. Of course, a shared political platform did not alter the fact that there were controversies, one of which concerned the participation of the Israeli Mapai and another of which concerned the organization's own attitude to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. However, the arrival of military-backed authoritarian regimes in Indonesia and Burma in the 1960s heralded the organization's demise.

In the meantime, in 1951 the 'traditional' social democratic parties set up a new international organization, the Socialist International (SI). Talbot Imlay (Chapter 15) describes its evolution – how it was strong especially in Europe initially but grew rapidly in former colonies from the 1970s. The result was a blurring of its political profile, and in the decades that followed it became increasingly clear that the SI's 'political pertinence waned'. In 2013, through the intercession of the German party in particular, a new international was established, called the 'Progressive Alliance', a rapidly growing alliance that thanks in part to a number of shared memberships itself influenced the SI.

Shelton Stromquist (Chapter 16) closes the third section by examining attempts to 'institute or expand a robust public sector of services essential to the health and well-being of urban populations, whether in small or large cities'. The author distinguishes a first phase from 1820 which culminated in the Paris Commune of 1871. The era of the Second International then laid the foundation for all subsequent attempts at urban social reform, first in Europe and certain of its settler colonies (United States, Australia, New Zealand), but soon also in India and parts of Latin America. The interwar years were a highpoint, building on previous experiences, with 'Red Vienna' its most striking example. A third 'wave' began in the 1960s, by which time the decolonization process was largely complete. Today, significant elements of 'municipal socialism' have become commonplace, although, Stromquist argues, they are often no longer recognized as such.

After the Second World War forms of socialism sprang up in various parts of the world that were neither classic social democracy nor identifiable with the communism that was now strongly emerging. The fourth section focuses on these alternative trajectories and covers divergent socialist experiments

and ideologies in several parts of the world, including Israel/Palestine, South Asia, the Arab world, and Africa. In Chapter 17, Joel Beinin zooms in on the Zionist-socialist movement that emerged in the early twentieth century and that eventually became the dominant force first in Zionism and then, from 1948, in the newly founded state of Israel. Its main instrument was the Histadrut, a proto-state established just after the First World War. The Histadrut attempted to divide the labour market and the rest of the economy into Jewish and non-Jewish sectors. Associated with the Histadrut were the *kibbutzim*, originally socialist-inspired collective agricultural settlements. These were embedded in an economy with 'a decidedly anti-socialist basis', and resulted in part from the expropriation and oppression of Palestinian Arabs. Socialist Zionism changed its party form several times, and had to compete with small non-Zionist parties. It remained politically dominant until the 1970s, after which, however, it became less and less able to counter the ascendant religio-nationalist right. It is now a marginal force in Israeli politics.

In India, as Madhavan K. Palat shows in Chapter 18, multiple varieties of socialism emerged between the late 1920s and the late 1970s, usually grouped around or within the large Congress Party. Sometimes they were organized as a separate party (the Congress Socialist Party being one example); sometimes they took the form of more disparate factions (such as Congress's left wing, which was led by Jawaharlal Nehru). Inspired by 'Mahatma' Gandhi, many of them believed in the possibility of a non-violent transition to democratic and pluralistic socialism, although that did not prevent them from acting undemocratically from time to time and contrary to the constitution. As prime minister from India's independence in 1947 until 1964, Nehru prioritized the public sector, heavy industry, protection, planning, and welfare. He was a defender of the separation of religion and state, and endeavoured to ease social inequality through taxation, land reform, education, and affirmative action. From the 1970s onwards, however, the influence of socialism waned. More radical variants (communism, Maoism) retained or gained influence.

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), discussed by Jayadeva Uyangoda in Chapter 19, and set up in colonial Ceylon in 1935, belonged to the first generation of socialist parties in South Asia. Originally a broadly social democratic party influenced primarily by English reformist thought, towards the end of the 1930s the LSSP began to embrace revolutionary socialism. The LSSP's 'golden' phase was during the 1940s and 1950s when, despite splits and ideological shifts, the party remained a highly influential radical force in Sri Lanka, with strong parliamentary representation. The adoption in 1963 of

a new strategy of 'state capture through coalitions for socialist reforms' signalled its political decline and resulted in the loss of all its parliamentary seats in 1977. In response to the political accommodation on the part of the LSSP, a radical New Left emerged which, in 1971, initiated an anti-state rebellion.

From the 1950s to the 1970s attempts were made in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa to establish a distinctive indigenous socialism. Emma Hunter (Chapter 20) places these efforts in the immediate context of decolonization, with deeper roots in the aftermath of the global depression of the 1930s and the Second World War. Such efforts were shaped in widely varying ways, both religious and secular, from Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa* villagization in Tanzania, on the one hand, to Kwame Nkrumah's industrial strategy in Ghana, on the other. In the late 1960s and 1970s African socialism lost ground to its main rivals: communism and liberal market economics. Nonetheless, the concept of distributive justice continues to have a wide following.

In the Arab world, too, the appeal of socialism grew from the 1940s onwards; by the end of the 1960s, it had acquired an almost hegemonic influence, and in the most populous Arab countries it assumed the status of official state ideology. Abdel Razzaq Takriti and Hicham Safieddine (Chapter 21) reconstruct this development, after first outlining its history since the nineteenth century. Focusing on Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, they describe the historical context in which this development took place, its relationship to the pursuit of national liberation, and the far-reaching social, economic, and cultural changes to which it gave rise: agrarian reforms, nationalization, industrialization, a flourishing of the arts, and a significant strengthening of women's rights. Several influences – the struggle with Israel, militarization, neoliberalization, and the growing influence of conservative religious movements – meant the end of this development from the 1970s onwards.

A notable revival of socialism took place in Venezuela during the presidency of Hugo Chávez Frías (1999–2013), an army officer who was considered the undisputed leader of a broad movement for social transformation driven by discontent with corruption and the expropriation of the country's resources by the upper classes and foreign capital. In Chapter 22, Dario Azzellini describes the development of this movement in which workers, peasants, and parts of the army participated. From 2005 on, 'Chavismo' moved further to the left and defined itself as socialist. After Chávez's death in 2013 the alliance of different political forces and interests and the broad (even if often critical) support for the government held together by

Chávez's charismatic personality and political ability began a rapid process of fragmentation, which was accelerated by a deep economic crisis.

The fifth section concentrates on 'independent' socialist movements, that is, movements that were not anarchist and were neither social democratic nor communist. Willy Buschak (Chapter 23) opens this section with a study of the 'London Bureau' (1930–9), an alliance of left-wing socialist parties that included the German Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei, the British Independent Labour Party, and the Polish Bund, and of 'organizations in the Bureau's orbit'. The Bureau never had more than a marginal impact, but the ideas developed by a number of its prominent members after its disbandment would have a significant influence in the 1940s and 1950s.

Even after the Second World War, there were still socialists who felt no affinity with either the social democratic or the communist mainstreams. Knut Kjeldstadli (Chapter 24) distinguishes two waves of party formation. The first, between 1957 and 1964, was inspired largely by the pursuit of a pacifist and anti-colonial policy. The second wave took place during the 1980s and 1990s, prompted by disillusionment among Maoists and communists. All parties were characterized by an anti-capitalist stance and a desire to enhance the power of the working class, and in most cases by economic policies that were gradualist, reformist, parliamentarian, and legalist – though in every case in favour of public ownership. Like the London Bureau, the post-war left-wing socialists too remained in a 'more or less permanent minority position'.

While left-wing socialist parties seldom gained much influence, the political environment in which they operated did change – a change they themselves helped to influence. According to Gerd-Rainer Horn (Chapter 25), the New Left that emerged after 1956 embodied the first new transnational political current on the left since the formation of communism in the years after the Russian Revolution. In response to the crises of Suez, Hungary, Poland, and Algeria, a colourful and largely pluralistic association of individuals emerged from Mexico to Japan, with its highpoint in 1968. Thereafter the movement disintegrated, for one reason because parts of it organized as 'miniature Leninist combat parties'. The rise of the Far Left thus signalled the end of the New Left.

The last section contains several studies that assess the entire socialist experience from a variety of perspectives. Over time, socialist movements have adopted very different attitudes to colonialism. Even within individual parties the subjugation and exploitation of other peoples sometimes caused major controversy. Reinhart Kössler outlines in Chapter 26 how differences of opinion developed from the early nineteenth century, and to

illustrate their evolution he uses three main cases, namely, those of the German SPD until 1919, the French SFIO until Algerian independence in 1963, and the Swedish SAP's solidarity with African liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s. In general, the majority of socialists of all types seem to have long viewed colonialism as a progressive project that merely required 'civilizing'.

Susan Zimmermann in her overview in Chapter 27 of the past two centuries argues that socialist movements have almost always had an 'ambiguous relationship' with women's emancipation, continually struggling with the recurring question of whether the class aspect or the gender aspect was central to resolving the 'women's question'. Women were active in a number of anarchist, social democratic, and other movements, often in large numbers, but for a long period men remained absolutely dominant in the upper echelons of organizations and in political representation, something that began to change only with the rise of the New Left and the second feminist wave during which 'class' and 'gender' became increasingly politically integrated.

The relationship between socialism and ecology is central to Ted Benton's (Chapter 28) wide-ranging contribution. Benton combines reflections on the history of socialist thinking on ecology with observations on the past and present of specific movements. He points to older theories and activities, especially those of anarchists, but emphasizes the period from the 1960s, since when threats such as pollution, loss of biodiversity, floods, deforestation, and global warming have gradually impressed on more and more people within the socialist and workers' movements the importance of 'environmental issues'. Benton describes the most influential 'eco-socialist' theoretical movements that have emerged, and identifies a number of unresolved political challenges.

Göran Therborn (Chapter 29) too focuses on the last half century. In his retrospective of the changes since 1970, he explores the causes of the current crisis of social democracy, which manifests itself in weakened class-based organizations, reduced workplace and economic influence, and a decline in electoral support. That crisis has been unfolding since the early 1980s and has also affected new or re-established parties in eastern Europe. Therborn points out *inter alia* that the apogee of social democracy internationally coincided more or less with the peak in industrial capitalism, and that de-industrialization, including in the North Atlantic region, has introduced a new capitalist dynamic driven by financial capital and digitization – a tendency to which no response has yet been found. In Therborn's view, however, that does not rule out a future revival.

Socialism in the Balance

Socialism is now about two centuries old, and during its long history has taken many forms. Building on a long egalitarian tradition, it began in the 1820s–1840s with ‘utopian’ experiments. Influenced by the rapid emergence of capitalism and the changing nature of states, the movement gradually bifurcated after the revolutions of 1848, with one wing striving to build an alternative society without states in the here and now, the other striving rather to transform the state so that it could be used to build that alternative society. The first movement – anarchism, and the syndicalism associated with it – peaked in the final decades before the First World War; by c. 1940 it was a spent force. The second movement – initially embodied in social democracy but later taking other forms, too – saw its heyday in the first few decades after the Second World War. Neither movement succeeded in achieving the original goal of replacing capitalism with a socially just and democratic society, nor did the third movement, communism, achieve it. We have had to omit communism from this collection of essays, but suffice it to say that the Soviet empire collapsed, and China and Vietnam have taken the path to capitalism; and in more than a few non-communist countries communist parties have been dissolved after electoral decline, splits, or financial bankruptcy.

It appears that socialist movements in highly developed capitalism have reached a historic impasse. So far, the two classic strategies for creating a post-capitalist society – reform or revolution – have both proved to be ineffective. The revolutions of the twentieth century all took place in pre-industrial or industrializing countries, and never in fully developed capitalist societies. Some might consider this a coincidence, but the consistent absence of working-class revolutions rather suggests a structural reason. Although the working class became extremely numerous as economic growth advanced during the twentieth century, it never again behaved anywhere as radically as it had in Russia in 1917. Consider events in France in May–June 1968, research into which has shown that workers were much less revolutionary than the students:

Ironically enough, Maoists, Trotskyites, and *Les Temps Modernes* have rather uncritically accepted PCF [French Communist Party] claims to represent the working class. They assumed that the party controlled the workers and could have made revolution. It is doubtful, though, that even a revolutionary PCF would have been able to convince wage earners to take power . . . Wage earners might have desired to limit the ‘arbitrary’ authority of supervisory

personnel and to slow down production rhythms, but little evidence exists to suggest that workers wanted to take over their factories. Instead, they demanded higher pay (especially for lower-paid personnel), a further reduction of work time, total (and not half) payment for days lost to strikes, a nominal recuperation of strike time, and – for the activists – a union presence in the factory.⁵³

Another symptom of the non-arrival of revolutions in advanced capitalist societies seems manifest in the fact noted by Perry Anderson that counter-institutions of dual power have never arisen in consolidated parliamentary democracies: ‘all the examples of soviets or councils so far have emerged out of disintegrating autocracies (Russia, Hungary, Austria), defeated military regimes (Germany), ascendant or overturned fascist states (Spain, Portugal)’.⁵⁴

One element important for any explanation of the non-arrival of revolutions was suggested by Eduard Bernstein after the failed German revolution of 1918–19. He wrote in 1921: ‘the more varied the internal structure, the more developed the division of labour and the co-operation of its organs, the greater the risk of serious damage to their possibilities for life if an attempt is made to radically transform their form and content in a short time with the use of violent means’.⁵⁵ There has been a considerable growth in collectively useful state functions in advanced capitalist countries, and the importance of public administration for the daily lives of the people has accordingly increased enormously. A revolution would therefore completely disrupt daily life. The changed role of the state has driven sharply upwards the ‘costs’ of attempts to overthrow capitalist society.⁵⁶ That is not, of course, the full explanation, and we may be sure that other elements include the incorporation of workers as citizens and consumers, and the opaque distribution of power between state, companies, and other influential bodies.⁵⁷ Social revolution seems to be out of the question for as long as developed capitalism manages to avoid any very deep, disruptive crisis.

53 M. Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), p. 197.

54 P. Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 196.

55 E. Bernstein, *Die deutsche Revolution, ihr Ursprung, ihr Verlauf und ihr Werk*, vol. 1, *Geschichte der Entstehung und ersten Arbeitsperiode der deutschen Republik* (Berlin: Verlag Gesellschaft und Erziehung, 1921), p. 172.

56 R. Löwenthal, ‘The “Missing Revolution” in Industrial Societies: Comparative Reflections on a German Problem’, in V. R. Berghahn and M. Kitchen (eds.), *Germany in the Age of Total War* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 240–57.

57 For a more detailed analysis, see M. van der Linden, ‘Workers and Revolutions: A Historical Paradox’, in P. Brandon, P. Jafari and St. Müller (eds.), *Worlds of Labour Turned Upside Down: Revolutions and Labour Relations in Global Historical Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 19–49.

But the peaceful abolition of capitalism through reform has also so far proved to be impossible, a problem most clearly to be seen in the popular front governments in Spain (1936–9), France (1936–8), and Chile (1970–3). Experience suggests that the evolution of such governments is characterized by a certain logic:⁵⁸

- A government with a socialist reform programme is possible in a period of strongly resurgent social conflict with increasing radicalization among parts of the urban working class and any agricultural allies they might have. In such circumstances, certain of the traditional elite who have come to feel cornered and threatened might be willing to accept for a time at least a government that not long before they had insisted would lead to their demise. Examples are Germany in 1918–19, which had a government led by the SPD, and France in 1936, when the Popular Front joined the government.
- The traditional elite – or at least a significant number of them – are prepared, however reluctantly, to at least tolerate some sort of socialist government if deepening contradictions threaten to become uncontrollable for ‘normal’ governments. They *tolerate* such government in the hope that doing so will prevent the working class from becoming more radical, and they do so *reluctantly* because, despite everything, it is an expression of the political power of the labour movement. Elites are uneasy because many socialist measures place heavy burdens on large companies and large land-owners (e.g., nationalization of the commodities sector, of the banks and large foreign companies, expropriation of land, social reforms, significant wage increases).
- This fails to break the power of the traditional elite: resistance to the government grows among entrepreneurs and land-owners; foreign capital tries to force concessions from the government through trade boycotts, termination of credit, or forced currency devaluation; or by applying pressure through targeted cuts in global commodity prices, as happened in the case of Chile with copper. The elite continue to exercise a considerable influence on the state apparatus. Because of the unstable political and social power relationships of cadres in the administrative and legal systems, the army and police are replaced only to a very limited extent; the basic structure and function of the state apparatus remain the same.

58 V. Brandes, ‘Linksregierung, Kapitalreproduktion und die Grenzen staatlicher Handlungsautonomie’, in *Handbuch 5: Staat* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), pp. 401–23, esp. pp. 410–12.

- If a socialist government is then able to de-radicalize the working class, it will retain the support of important elements of the traditional elite. If it cannot do that, revolutionary tendencies among the grassroots will become stronger, with the danger that the government will lose control over them. If that happens, many of the traditional elite will look to a military counter-revolution, exactly as happened in Spain in 1936 and in Chile in 1973. The overthrow of an incumbent socialist government can then be prevented only by armed resistance.

It has so far proved impossible to abolish capitalism permanently.⁵⁹ However, it has become clear that key reforms can be implemented within it. Locally at least, capitalism can be made more social, for which the Scandinavian welfare states are probably the best evidence. Without fundamentally compromising the power of big business, the Scandinavians proved themselves able to provide good health care and education for the majority. Such reforms were possible most especially between the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the crisis of 1974. That period indeed constitutes ‘a significant divergence’ from the years before, and after.⁶⁰

This historical intermezzo – which some call ‘organized capitalism’ and others ‘Fordism’ – embodied the climax of the international social democratic movement in the North – or so we can say in retrospect at least, because at first things looked very different with the rise of National Socialism and fascism, and the Second World War. All elements of the labour movement flourished – most of all, of course, during the first few decades after 1945. The three main branches of the labour movement then reached their apogee. Consumer co-operatives flourished from the 1950s to the 1960s, until the upheavals in retail trade (increasing competition from modern supermarkets, mass advertising, etc.) led to economic difficulties. Unions generally grew in size; most of them saw their membership numbers peaking in the 1970s or 1980s. Workers’ parties were also doing well (Table I.2).

Paralleling that development, but only partly caused by it, welfare states came into being in the wealthiest regions of global capitalism – not only in western Europe, but in Japan, Australia, and to a lesser extent in North America, too – with attendant developments such as occupational health and safety legislation, working time regulations, compulsory insurance, and the institutionalization of collective agreements. Wide-ranging social welfare

59 Cuba may be the exception that proves the rule.

60 H. M. Schwartz, *States versus Markets: The Emergence of a Global Economy*, 3rd edn (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 181.

provisions were created, too. For many families this meant that husbands became the main breadwinners, while their wives stopped paid work to concentrate on household and children.

Western welfare states showed once again that capitalism has a certain institutional plasticity and is therefore able to assume many guises. At the same time, the reforms revealed important weaknesses. In the first place these reforms were completely tied to nation-states and therefore predicated on excluding others. Writing in 1960, the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal noted:

We will never be able to come to grips with the international problems of today and tomorrow if we do not squarely face the fact that *the democratic Welfare State in the rich countries of the Western world is protectionist and nationalistic*. The peoples in those countries have achieved economic welfare at home – economic progress and a substantial increase in liberty and equality of opportunity for all within their boundaries – at the expense of indulging in nationalistic economic policies.⁶¹

Welfare states not only exacerbate differences in prosperity in the world, they are also forced to close their borders to people from poorer parts of the world who would also like to enjoy such prosperity and generous welfare arrangements, something strikingly illustrated by the current refugee crisis. Moreover, there are strong indications that the creation of welfare states was made possible partly *because of* global inequality. The Dutch social democratic economist Jan Tinbergen (Nobel Prize for Economics, 1969) calculated in 1930 that immediately severing colonial ties with Indonesia would make 10 per cent of Dutch workers unemployed.

Social democracy's 'forward march' (Eric Hobsbawm) came to an end in the 1970s–1980s. As Michał Kalecki predicted during the Second World War, full employment capitalism actually reflected the growing power of the working class, to whose challenge capital was obliged to find an answer.⁶² The average rate of profit gradually fell again and economic growth slowed, bringing about an ideological shift from an expansionist demand-driven policy to an anti-working-class, supply-oriented policy with a contradictory demand policy. As a result, since the 1980s the wage share (i.e., wages as a share of overall income) has fallen in many countries, albeit at different

61 G. Myrdal, *Beyond the Welfare State: Economic Planning and Its International Implications* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 135 (emphasis in the original).

62 M. Kalecki, 'Political aspects of full employment', *Political Quarterly* 14, 4 (1943), pp. 322–30.

speeds. On all fronts, however, the achievements of the welfare states are being dismantled brick by brick. The social question that so taxed the minds of observers in the nineteenth century seems to be enjoying a revival.⁶³

Does Socialism Have a Future?

In light of the above, many have already been prompted to ask, 'Is there a future for socialism?'⁶⁴ Indubitably, most socialist projects have not seen long-term success; but there remains nonetheless a need still widely felt for a more democratic, egalitarian society based on solidarity. The research findings of the independent Pew Research Center in Washington, DC are noteworthy in this respect. In October 2019, for example, a survey of US citizens showed that 'About four-in-ten Americans (42%) have positive views of socialism. Among this group, the most frequently cited reason is that it will result in a fairer, more generous society (31% say this). This includes 10% who specifically express a belief that it is important for the government to take care of its citizens or for fellow citizens to care for each other.'⁶⁵

Given the continued and powerful offensive on the part of pro-capitalist forces, in the short term the tactics available to traditional or any newly arising socialist movements will largely be confined to defensive measures, although progressive reforms will, of course, remain possible, for example, in the fields of individual rights or physical and sexual autonomy. In the words of Alexander Kluge, this policy will mainly consist of 'drilling through hard boards'.⁶⁶

As for the more comprehensive socialist goals, the philosopher István Mészáros claims that 'the future of socialism will be decided in the United States, however pessimistic this may sound . . . Socialism either can assert itself universally and in such a way that it embraces all those areas, including the most developed capitalist areas of the world, or it won't succeed.'⁶⁷

63 J. Breman et al. (eds.), *The Social Question in the Twenty-First Century: A Global View* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

64 For example, A. Gorz, *Adieux au prolétariat. Au delà du socialisme* (Paris: Galilée, 1980); E. Lucas, *Vom Scheitern der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Basel and Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag and Roter Stern, 1983); R. Corfe, *The Death of Socialism: The Irrelevance of the Traditional Left and the Call for a Progressive Politics of Universal Humanity* (Bury St Edmunds: Arena Books, 2009); J. Grondeux, *Socialisme. La fin d'une histoire?* (Paris: Payot, 2012); J. R. Otteson, *The End of Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

65 Pew Research Center, *In Their Own Words: Behind Americans' Views of 'Socialism' and 'Capitalism'* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2019), p. 5.

66 A. Kluge, *Drilling through Hard Boards*, trans. W. Hoban (London: Seagull Books, 2017).

67 I. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition* (London: Merlin Press, 1995), pp. 985–6.

Should there be a revival, the new forms of socialism will probably look different from the more traditional ones. It seems safe to say that success will be possible only if the major challenges (global economy, ecology, gender equality, social security, climate change, etc.) are substantively combined and tackled transnationally. And there will need to be a reconsideration of the bifurcation of anarchism and party socialism that has been the central theme of the present collection of essays. Anarchism has tended – although not exclusively so – to emphasize ‘Socialism from below’, that is, the view that ‘Socialism can be realized only through the self-emancipation of activized masses in motion, reaching out for freedom with their own hands ... as actors (not merely subjects) on the stage of history.’

Party socialists, on the other hand, have usually emphasized ‘socialism from above’, that is, the view that socialism must be ‘handed down’ to the masses by a ruling elite⁶⁸ – a tendency that has been reinforced in recent decades owing to political parties having few roots in society. Although they might try to listen to citizens, especially at election time, they have become mainly a means whereby the state communicates with society, instead of the reverse.⁶⁹ If socialism is to survive it will therefore presumably have to combine ‘from-below’ and ‘from-above’ approaches by strategically uniting government policy, self-organization, and large-scale mobilization. Such change will take a great deal of time. According to Max Weber, ‘the spirit’ of capitalism has been ‘the product of a long and arduous process of education’, a development continuing over centuries.⁷⁰ Likewise, a socialist society is probably conceivable only as the outcome of

68 H. Draper, ‘The two souls of socialism’, *New Politics* 5, 1 (1966), pp. 57–84. The contrast between ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ does not completely mirror the contrast between party socialism and anarchism. On the one hand, there have been anarchists who believed that an enlightened despot could bring about a free society. In 1852, Proudhon saw in Emperor Louis Bonaparte the ‘agent of a new period’, ‘a superior formula of the revolution’, and the builder of a socialist France: P.-J. Proudhon, *La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d’état du 2 décembre* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1852), pp. 77, 115, 278. And, during the Spanish Civil War, the Republican government included four anarchist ministers, among them the famous Federica Montseny (see George Esenwein, Chapter 16, in Volume I). On the other hand, the history of party socialist movements also shows attempts to develop grassroots democracy; a well-known example is ‘participatory budgeting’, which was first introduced in Porto Alegre by the Brazilian Workers’ Party in the late 1980s and subsequently tried out in many other countries (see Shelton Stromquist, Chapter 16, this volume).

69 P. Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2014).

70 M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 25.

a comprehensive process of education, a process in which social change is accompanied by self-change.⁷¹

Who shall achieve it?
Gloomy question
To which destiny wears a mask;
When on the day of great misfortune,
Bleeding, all mankind falls dumb.
But revive yourselves with new songs,
Stay no longer bowed:
For earth engenders them again
Just as always it has done. Goethe, *Faust*, Part II, Act 3

⁷¹ In 1850, Marx criticized the view that the establishment of socialism is 'the result of an effort of will' and not 'the product of the realities of the situation': 'Whereas we say to the workers: You have 15, 20, 50 years of civil war to go through in order to alter the situation and to train yourselves for the exercise of power, it is said: We must take power at once, or else we may as well take to our beds.' See 'Meeting of the Central Authority, 15 September 1850', in *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), vol. x, pp. 625–9 at p. 626.

PART I

★

TRANSFORMING STATE
POWER

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ROUTES IN EUROPE

I

Social Democracy in Germany

STEFAN BERGER AND THOMAS WELSKOPP

Social democracy in Germany emerged within the matrix of national unification and the separation conflicts between liberals of all shades and radical democrats since the mid-nineteenth century. The term 'democracy' in the movement's (and then the party's) name has to be taken as seriously as the commitment to 'socialism' commonly associated with it. German social democracy almost from its birth adopted the form of a political party movement. It preceded the rise of trade unions and, for quite some time, did not find a modus of co-operation and mutual support with them; this came into existence only in the Wilhelmine era. German social democracy, consequently, was not the paragon for labour movements everywhere else, the role model of a disciplined and highly organized Marxist revolutionary people's army, as has been the fixed imagination of socialist mythology and much of leftist historiography.

The Pre-History of Social Democracy

The ferment of the French Revolution of 1789 also reached the German lands in the 1790s. Plebeian Jacobin groups formed, for example, in Hamburg, where they combined political demands with calls for social reform. Unjust forms of taxation and repressive authorities fuelled their grievances. Armed with the language of the New Testament but also the writings of Thomas Paine and other English-American revolutionaries, they upheld ideas of inviolable human rights, and formulated their right to resist a social order they perceived as illegitimate.¹ The leaders of the German Jacobins were, by

¹ W. Grab, *Ein Volk muß seine Freiheit selbst erobern. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Jakobiner* (Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1984).

and large, members of the middle classes, but they set up educational associations and school classes for the lower classes whom they sought to politicize.

The political protests of the Jacobins were initially rarely connected with criticisms of early industrialization, partly because the latter had as yet hardly left its mark in the German lands. When early industrialists introduced machine work in factories in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the journeymen and artisanal workers who often came to populate these early factories protested against the new working conditions and began destroying the machinery that they held responsible for the changes in their working conditions that they did not approve of. Such *Fabrikemeuten* (factory disturbances), for example in Solingen in 1826, in Krefeld in 1828, and across Saxony in the 1830s, stood next to various forms of subsistence and hunger protests that often focused on the just price for bread or other staple foods. Charivaris and catwalks, where workers would congregate in front of the home of the industrialist who was the focus of their dissatisfaction, often turned to violence, but they were invariably localized and sporadic, and there was neither the intention nor the ability to channel the protest into more durable organizations.² Workers' discontent could result in insurrections, like that of the Silesian weavers of 1844 that was interpreted by later socialists as the first stirrings of class consciousness, even if it was far more rooted in 'moral economies'³ related to traditional ways of life.

If factory work was not established without a series of often violent protests, factory owners frequently sought to employ women and children, thereby undercutting wages for male workers, which is why early male-dominated trade unions, like the Cigarmakers' Union in 1848/9, came to demand a family wage and a ban on female employment. The Gotha programme of the social democrats of 1875 still reflected this ambition, as it declared itself in favour of a ban on female labour in all cases 'where it might be deleterious to health and morality'. Yet women workers also began to form their own trade unions, for example, the garment workers of Berlin and the tailoresses of Bielefeld in the context of the 1848 revolution.

Journeymen's associations, whose membership numbered between 550 and 2,000, were set up in the 1830s.⁴ Though they remained politically insignificant, they were important breeding grounds for socialist theories.

2 D. Geary, *European Labour Protest, 1848–1939* (London: St Martin's Press, 1981), p. 27.

3 On the concept of 'moral economy', see E. P. Thompson, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century', *Past and Present* 50 (1971), pp. 76–136.

4 W. Schieder, *Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Die Auslandsvereine im Jahrzehnt nach der Julirevolution von 1830* (Stuttgart: Klett Verlag, 1963), pp. 135f.

Here early socialist intellectuals, such as Georg Büchner and Saint-Simon, were read, and ideas of a socialist revolution grew. Religious language and symbolism were popular among those radicals who formed early socialist leagues, such as the League of Outlaws (Bund der Geächteten, Paris, 1834), the League of Justice (Bund der Gerechtigkeit, Paris, 1836), or the League of Communists (Bund der Kommunisten, London, 1847), for which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote their famous *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. One of the key theoreticians of early socialism in Germany during the 1830s and 1840s was Wilhelm Weitling, himself a travelling journeyman-tailor. In 1838, Weitling published *Humanity as It Is and as It Should Be*, which is widely regarded as the first socialist programme in the German language.⁵ Here and in another influential book titled *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, Weitling condemned contemporary society, which he saw as corrupted by money, property, and inheritance. Only a social revolution could bring about a future society based on equality, common ownership, and individual freedom. For Weitling, socialism was the practical expression of true Christianity. His analysis of capitalism spoke to the experiences of urban artisans who often perceived capitalists as unproductive middlemen robbing the producers of at least part of their wages. As they had strong corporate traditions, Weitling's championing of producers' co-operatives made sense to them.⁶

From 1848 to the 'Anti-Socialist Law': Early Social Democracy and 'Associational Socialism'

In Germany, as in other European countries and the United States, the first labour organizations did not form in response to early industrialization but as a reaction to the increasing commercialization of traditional artisanal trades. Small master artisans and journeymen found their skills depreciated in markets where capital more and more dictated the terms and the value of work and degraded, in the words of contemporaries, the 'skilled art' of the artisan to just another commodity. The first union organizations in Germany – the associations of printers and cigarmakers, founded in 1848 – originated in trades that both came closest to the British and American wholesale expansion of shop sizes and were least hampered by the guild legacy. Yet, for most German tradesmen, trade unions appeared as

5 W. Weitling, *Das Evangelium des armen Sünders. Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1971).

6 See also Bertel Nygaard, Chapter 9, in Volume I.

a counter-intuitive model of organization reminiscent of the worst facets of the guild. They preferred associations modelled after the bourgeois clubs (*Vereine*) that included members of all trades, and even small masters and shop-owners (and intellectuals) if they were accepted as not exploiting other men who worked with their hands.

These workers' associations (*Arbeitervereine*) – or workers' educational associations (*Arbeiterbildungsvereine*) – became the centres of social life for thousands of young, male members of dozens of artisanal and commercial occupations. They served as 'all-purpose organizations' whose main function was to provide a forum for political debate where young journeymen and small masters could live out their aspirations to become fully entitled citizens. Therefore, the frequent club meetings emulated parliamentary procedures and rituals. At regular intervals they staged elaborate festivals, which were designed not only to attract new members by offering a self-consciously celebrated cultural conviviality but also to give women a chance to participate in club life that would otherwise be legal 'red tape' for them. Typically, such events culminated in dance balls that always lasted, as proud reports in the party newspapers claimed, into the wee hours of the next day. Besides these mainstays of social democratic life, the *Arbeitervereine* frequently maintained burial insurance, strike funds, support for travelling journeymen, and other collective coffers. They could form the nucleus of producers' co-operatives and early unions, but turned out to be especially suited to organizing public election campaigns even for the early social democratic nominees for the Reichstag.

After a prelude in the revolution of 1848, culminating in the founding of the Deutsche Arbeiterverbrüderung in Berlin (whose operating headquarters moved to Leipzig soon afterwards), they mushroomed again in the early 1860s, clustering in regions like Saxony, Hamburg, Frankfurt, the southwest, the lower Rhine, and – rather late – Berlin. Despite their 'universal' self-image, however, workers' associations were not actively recruiting industrial workers; they excluded women even where the law did not prohibit female membership, and they remained unresponsive towards the agricultural population.

Given the explosive nature of public life in a post-revolutionary, pre-national Germany still governed by more or less reactionary monarchical autocracies, the workers' associations were immediately swallowed up by conflicting factions of the bourgeois liberal movement struggling for a unified German nation. Thus, the German labour movement was politicized almost from the outset. In contrast to the United Kingdom or the

United States, it originated not as a trade union but as a political party movement. The workers (by the definition of their associations) soon drifted to the left, radical democratic wing of the nationalist mainstream and eventually began to emancipate themselves from bourgeois liberal hegemony. In 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle founded the General Workers' Association of All Germany (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein) explicitly as a political party fighting for universal male suffrage. He envisioned an agitation force at his personal disposal. Yet local chapters soon adopted the club life cherished by the majority of the *Arbeitervereine*. After Lassalle's untimely death in 1864, this piecemeal return into the mainstream of the German labour movement gained traction.⁷ In 1869, a rival social democratic party organization emerged under the leadership of August Bebel, a small master woodturner from Leipzig, and Wilhelm Liebknecht, a journalist who had taken part in the revolution of 1848 and had spent years in exile in London, socializing with Marx and other expatriates before repatriating to Saxony.

Although these two parties competed to be recognized by Karl Marx, still exiled in London, German social democrats saw him as a moral rather than an ideological authority. Marxist doctrine entered the social democratic discourse only on a tactical, not a programmatic, level, even as the factions united to form the Socialist Workers' Party (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands) in 1875. This triggered Marx's furious criticism, blaming Liebknecht and others for having refused or failed to absorb his and Engels' socialist doctrine even 'skin-deep'. Instead of embracing Marx's revolutionary theory, they heralded an 'associational socialism' firmly rooted in the experiences and radical democratic world views of an artisanal small workshop universe that was ostensibly collapsing under the 'double yoke of the powers of capitalism and the powers of the [autocratic states'] bayonets'.⁸ 'Associational socialism' did not call for state-controlled centralized industrial production, but for autonomous co-operatives combining independent craft producers. The egalitarian 'association', democratically administered, was to replace both guilds and the market. This social democratic model actually represented a transfer of democracy to the economy and largely dodged the question of private versus collective ownership of the means of production.

7 T. Offermann, *Die erste deutsche Arbeiterpartei. Organisation, Verbreitung und Sozialstruktur von ADAV und LADAV 1863–1871* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2002).

8 Quoted in T. Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2000), pp. 592, 640.

Since capitalism was perceived as a financial vampire draining the lifeblood from honest production rather than as the driving force behind industrialization, anything short of its wholesale destruction could only appear as a 'palliative'. The solution to the 'social question' had to be political. For social democrats this meant overthrowing the autocratic state by means of a revolution that they depicted as a – more successful – reprise of 1848 and replacing it with a true democratic republic (*Volksstaat*). When a unified Germany became an unwanted reality in the Prussian-dominated Deutsches Reich in 1871, and universal male suffrage was indeed introduced by Otto von Bismarck on the federal level, social democrats soon developed outstanding capabilities as election campaigners. Until 1878, when the party was banned under the Anti-Socialist Law (*Gesetz wider die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Social-Demokratie*), they managed to win thirteen seats in the Reichstag, and they mobilized up to 440,000 supporters or roughly 8 per cent of the popular vote.⁹

The Inexorable Advance of an Outlawed Social Democratic Party Movement in Imperial Germany

In Germany, the union movement barely survived its close affiliation with social democracy, as both forms of organization were declared illegal and prosecuted alike under the 1878 Anti-Socialist Law (commonly referred to as the *Sozialistengesetz*), which remained in effect until 1890. Yet both eventually turned their outlaw status into an overwhelming success: the Social Democrats, whose participation in campaign activities remained legal even under the ban, won almost 20 per cent of the popular vote in the Reichstag election of 1887 and became the party with the greatest public appeal in Germany, mobilizing 1.4 million supporters to flock to the polls. The Social Democrats meanwhile had developed into a party of industrial workers, mostly skilled, in medium-sized workshops, yet with their former artisanal core intact. In the early twentieth century, the party basically organized a heterogeneous socio-cultural urban milieu in the working-class neighbourhoods of large and medium-sized cities.

The Erfurt programme of 1891, in its first part, confirmed the conversion of the SPD to Marxism during the period of the Anti-Socialist Laws, as it committed the party to work towards the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order. However, in its second part it outlined a programme of

⁹ Ibid., p. 495.

evolutionary reform that necessitated working within the system it was supposed to end. This tension between revolutionary aspiration and reformist practice came to characterize social democracy in Wilhelmine Germany.¹⁰ The Marxist teleology that capitalism would collapse under its own internal contradictions lent itself to such a stance.¹¹ Those social democrats who were active in parliaments at local, regional, and national levels or otherwise engaged in practical politics tended to be keen to do something in the here and now. Hence, a reformist practice came to characterize social democratic politics in Wilhelmine Germany, even if Eduard Bernstein's 'revisionism' was repeatedly rejected at party conferences.¹² Reformism was most pronounced where it could find political allies, which was especially the case in south-western Germany.

Where social democrats met with discrimination and exclusion, they were more likely to withdraw into a revolutionary cocoon in the form of a web of social democratic organizations. Not only was the SPD with over 1 million individual party members the biggest socialist party in the world just before the First World War, it also built a range of ancillary organizations: social democratic trade unions, which tended to number among the strongest supporters of reformist policies; and social democratic co-operatives and many ancillary cultural and sports organizations, from cycling and walking clubs to chess and gymnastics clubs, theatre groups, and choirs. Sizeable social democratic youth and women's movements developed new ideas about youth and demanded equal rights for women. August Bebel's classic *Women and Socialism*, published in 1879 and translated into dozens of other languages, has become a classic of feminist literature. Nevertheless, the party and its wider milieu were still characterized by a very male culture, and women certainly did not have an easy position here. The gap between theory and practice was often huge.¹³ Overall, in imperial Germany you were a social democrat from cradle to grave, going to a social democratic kindergarden, living your life in social democratic organizations, and being buried by

10 D. Groh, *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1973).

11 On Bebel, see J. Schmidt, *August Bebel: Social Democracy and the Founding of the Labour Movement* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019).

12 M. B. Steger, *The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

13 R. J. Evans, 'Socialist Women and Political Radicalism', in R. J. Evans (ed.), *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 93–123; H. Niggemann, *Emanzipation zwischen Sozialismus und Feminismus. Die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung im Kaiserreich* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1981).

a social democratic burial association.¹⁴ This broad network of social democratic associations was both a strength and a weakness of the SPD. On the one hand, it gave social democrats a powerful identity, but, on the other hand, it also provided a world of its own, a milieu that was separated from other milieux in imperial Germany and made political alliances with other forces more difficult. Even within wider working-class milieux in Germany it was quite separate, and the workers' politics of everyday life often had little to do with social democracy.¹⁵

During the period of the Anti-Socialist Laws and long after, social democrats were often denounced as 'fellows without a fatherland'. Indeed, the party practised a pronounced internationalism. It was regarded by many socialists elsewhere as a model to follow and as the leading party in the Second International.¹⁶ Following Marx, social democrats emphasized that class solidarities were more important than national solidarities. Yet there were clear signs that social democrats were not averse to national sentiments.¹⁷ They distanced themselves from the chauvinist ethnic nationalism often enunciated by the government and right-wing political parties, and instead promoted a republican patriotism rooted in adherence to democratic and socially progressive traditions. Yet, as research on nationalism has stressed, it is often a slippery slope from patriotism to nationalism. This could already be seen in the ambiguities of German social democrats when they discussed the issue of colonialism. Officially the party was opposed to imperialism and the acquiring of a colonial empire, but many social democrats adhered to ideas about the superior Western or European civilization, and a minority even actively campaigned on behalf of a German colonial empire in which, they argued, German civilizational achievements would benefit other parts of the world.¹⁸ The party was thus not free of racism and colonialism – regardless of its official stance in favour of the equality of all people and its condemnation of

14 V. L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labour in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

15 A. Lüdtkke, 'Polymorphous Synchrony: German Industrial Workers and the Politics of Everyday Life', in M. van der Linden (ed.), *The End of Labour History?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 39–84.

16 P. Nettl, 'The German Social Democratic Party 1890–1914 as a political model', *Past & Present* 30 (1965), pp. 65–95. On the Second International, see K. J. Callahan, *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914* (Leicester: Troubador, 2010).

17 S. Berger, 'British and German Socialists between Class and National Solidarity', in S. Berger and A. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism, Labour and Ethnicity 1870–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 31–63.

18 R. Fletcher, *Revisionism and Empire: Socialist Imperialism in Germany, 1897–1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984).

imperialism. The nationalist stance of social democracy was also underlined by the SPD's support for the German war effort in August 1914, when it became clear to what extent many social democrats longed for the kind of recognition that such support brought from official circles. Many desired to belong to the national community from which they had been excluded for so long. Others cunningly used their willingness to support imperial Germany in order to achieve further reforms, such as the recognition of trade unions in the Auxiliary Services Law of 1916. However, the pre-war ambiguities between reform and revolution and the increasing opposition within social democracy towards the war ultimately led to a split in the SPD in 1916, with the formation of a pro-war Majority Social Democratic Party (Mehrheitssozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, MSPD) and an anti-war Independent Social Democratic Party (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, USPD).¹⁹ As a rule of thumb, the more reformist sections of pre-war social democracy found themselves in the MSPD, whilst the more revolutionary left-wing sections went to the USPD. There were some prominent exceptions, such as Eduard Bernstein, whose anti-war stance led him into the ranks of the USPD, which was also the home of Karl Kautsky, his personal friend and intellectual rival in the revisionism debates of the pre-war party. In the national parliament, the pro-war stance of the MSPD facilitated an alliance with moderate forces among liberal and Christian politicians seeking to bring about a negotiated peace after 1917.

Social Democracy in the Weimar Republic

When the German revolution reached Berlin on 9 November 1918, the leadership of the MSPD were in a difficult position. After all, the last imperial government under Max von Baden had asked its leader, Friedrich Ebert, to become chancellor and it had announced the abdication of the Kaiser without the latter's consent. To all intents and purposes, the social democrats were in government and thus did not need a political revolution. They therefore intended to end the revolution as soon as possible and steer it into a process of constitutional reform and parliamentarization that would give birth to the Weimar Republic. Revolutionary forces, including the nascent Communist Party, founded in January 1919, were too insignificant to make a real political difference. And the USPD, which did have a mass following, wanted to use the revolution to push through more decisive social and economic reforms,

19 S. Miller, *Burgfrieden und Klassenkampf. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1974); C. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955).

but they were too indecisive and without a blueprint of how to achieve their aims.²⁰ When the counter-revolution attempted to end the republic in 1920 in the form of the Kapp–Lüttwitz putsch, the MSPD was saved by the unions declaring a general strike in favour of the republic. Subsequently, in the federal states of the Weimar Republic, especially in Prussia, but also nationally, social democracy was frequently in government in alliance with the Catholic Centre Party and various liberal parties.²¹ Together with its allies, it turned the Weimar Republic into one of the most socially advanced and progressive political systems in the world, even if it could not achieve all its aims with regard to the building of a comprehensive welfare state, the extension of democracy to the social and economic spheres, and the rights of women.²² It was due also to the social democrats that women were enfranchised in the Weimar constitution. Between 1920 and 1932 between 40 and 45 per cent of all votes for the SPD came from women. Many working-class women, in particular, had been politicized by their experiences in the First World War, where they had participated in strikes, food riots, and consumer protests.²³ Among party members the percentage of women also rose from 16 per cent in 1914 to 23 per cent in 1931. The SPD had the largest group of women members of parliament in the Reichstag (between 11 and 14 per cent of its parliamentary party). Toni Sender, Marie Juchacz, Louise Schröder, and Louise Zietz, among others, established themselves in positions of leadership and authority – often against massive male prejudices. The SPD campaigned on behalf of equal rights and better educational opportunities for girls, but there is little evidence that social democratic households lived up to those ideals, as patriarchal values were also deeply embedded in the everyday world of social democrats.

On its political left it had to contend with the biggest communist party, the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD), outside the Soviet Union.²⁴ When large parts of the USPD decided to join the small KPD in 1920, it

20 W. Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19. Der wahre Beginn unserer Demokratie* (Berlin: Europa Verlag, 2017); M. Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution 1918/19* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

21 W. L. Guttsmann, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: From Ghetto to Government* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981).

22 R. Pore, *A Conflict of Interest? Women in German Social Democracy, 1919–1933* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981). See also P. Graves and H. Gruber (eds.), *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998).

23 B. J. Davies, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

24 E. D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).



Fig. 1.1 Election poster of the SPD, 1924: 'Everyone who works has the right to a decent life.' (Photograph by Ullstein Bild/Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

turned the KPD into a mass party overnight. The relationship between the social democrats and the communists during the Weimar Republic differed considerably depending on local circumstances. Where the revolutionary years at the beginning of the republic had witnessed violence and bloodshed and where the social democrats had joined forces with right-wing Freikorps

to defeat the revolutionary left, relations tended to be hostile. Where this was not the case, they could be far more amicable.²⁵ After all, both social democrats and communists were members in the same cultural and sport ancillary organizations until 1928, when the communists began to set up their own associations.²⁶ Even if both parties were still committed to ending capitalism and building a socialist society, the relations between them reached an all-time low in the phase after 1929 when the communists declared social democrats to be 'social fascists' and indeed the main enemy, as the social democrats were held responsible for leading the working class astray and preventing them from recognizing that their real class interests lay with communism. If, during the Weimar Republic, the social democrats were constantly under pressure from the left, they also struggled to retain a good relationship with their new-found democratic allies in the centre-right of the political spectrum. The Centre Party and the liberals were still characterized by strong anti-socialism and by a deep mistrust of social democracy, leading often to an unwillingness to compromise, something that was also true for the left wing of social democracy that reluctantly accepted alliances with 'bourgeois' parties. It did not help the young Weimar democracy that there was no tradition of parliamentary government in Germany that necessitated precisely such compromises in order to make coalition governments work. In times of economic crisis, therefore, the system was incredibly vulnerable.²⁷ Despite its best efforts, the SPD therefore was unable to stop the rise of the Nazis.²⁸

Resistance to National Socialism and Exile

After the National Socialists had been able to establish themselves in power, the persecution of their opponents began almost immediately. Many communists and social democrats were put into concentration camps; many were maltreated, tortured, and murdered. The executive of the SPD went into exile, first to Prague, later to Paris and London, where it sought to maintain

25 K.-M. Mallmann, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996).

26 W. L. Guttsman, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment* (Oxford: Berg, 1990); P. Lösche (ed.), *Solidargemeinschaft und Milieu. Sozialistische Kultur- und Freizeitorganisationen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1990).

27 H. A. Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik*, 3 vols. (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1984-7).

28 D. Harsch, *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

an underground network collecting information and organizing resistance wherever possible. A high point in the long history of social democracy in Germany was the party's opposition in parliament to the so-called Enabling Law of 1933 that amounted to a quasi-self-abolition of parliamentary government. With stormtroopers (members of the *Sturmabteilung*, SA) inside the parliament and under enormous political pressure, Otto Wels spoke on 23 March 1933 in moving words of the SPD's firm stance against National Socialism and reminded his audience of the persecution his comrades were suffering: 'Freiheit und Leben kann man uns nehmen. Die Ehre nicht' ('You can take liberty and life from us, but not our honour').²⁹ With communists no longer present in parliament, the social democrats were the only ones who had the courage to vote against the Enabling Law. In exile, the party executive published its Prague manifesto in 1934, committing the SPD to the aim of overthrowing Nazism and abolishing capitalism. However, it shied away from pursuing a united front policy with communism, distrusting the KPD leadership.³⁰ In April 1941 the SPD's executive united with representatives of a whole range of smaller socialist organizations to form the Union of German Socialist Organisations in Great Britain. It co-operated with the Allied secret services and aided the Allied propaganda efforts directed at Germany, in order to help defeat National Socialism. It also developed plans for the reorganization of a post-fascist Germany, and it sought to represent what it regarded as the 'true' Germany vis-à-vis the Allied governments.³¹

Any attempt to organize resistance cells inside Nazi Germany had failed by the mid-1930s, with the secret police (Gestapo) being extremely successful in imprisoning or killing almost all members of the approximately 300 cells with around 20,000 active members. They had engaged in acts of sabotage, leafletting, and the production of anti-Nazi literature. The *Sozialistische Aktion* was the most widely read underground newspaper in Nazi Germany, with an estimated readership of around 200,000–300,000. There were also many communist groups, anarcho-sindicalist organizations, and representatives of smaller socialist groups who were active in the resistance. After most of the active groups had been destroyed, many social democrats withdrew

29 *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstages* 457 (1933), pp. 32–4.

30 G.-R. Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996).

31 A. Glees, *Exile Politics during the Second World War: The German Social Democrats in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); L. Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration. Die 'Union deutscher sozialistischer Organisationen in Großbritannien' 1941–1946 und ihre Mitglieder. Protokolle, Erklärungen, Materialien* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1998).

into their private lives or went into exile, where they continued their struggle against the Nazi dictatorship. However, inside Nazi Germany, funerals of well-known social democrats could turn into demonstrations of social democratic solidarity, when thousands came out to pay their last respects to their erstwhile comrades. In exile in the Western democracies, France, Britain, and the United States, many social democrats encountered democratic pluralism, parliamentary democracy, and vibrant civil societies, which all had a deep impact on their political orientation. It confirmed their commitment to democratic practices and the parliamentary road to social reforms and socialism.³²

Social Democracy in Germany during the Cold War

The SPD was refounded in October 1945 in Wennigsen near Hanover amidst a widespread feeling among social democrats that they alone had the moral authority to lead Germany into an anti-fascist future. Kurt Schumacher, the SPD's first post-war leader, personified that attitude, and his mangled and emaciated body was a constant reminder of his suffering in the concentration camps of the Nazis.³³ Yet the high hopes of post-war social democracy were to be disappointed electorally, as the newly founded Christian Democratic Union (Christlich-Demokratische Union, CDU) came to dominate national politics in West Germany until the mid-1960s. In some of the federal states of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), social democratic politicians became the minister presidents, and leading social democrats also played an influential role in drafting the new constitution – called not a constitution but the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), as a constitution was something that was reserved for the reunified Germany. The right of asylum (Art. 16) and equal rights for men and women (Art. 3) were just two of the famous articles in the Basic Law that social democrats such as Carlo Schmid and Elisabeth Selbert fought hard for.

Immediately after the Second World War and in the early years of the FRG, the SPD campaigned on behalf of democratic socialism, including the nationalization of key industries and a planned economy. It was sceptical of

32 The most comprehensive treatment of working-class life and the labour movement under National Socialism can be found in M. Schneider, *Unterm Hakenkreuz. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung 1933–1939* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1999); M. Schneider, *In der Kriegsgesellschaft. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung 1939–1945* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2014).

33 L. J. Edinger, *Kurt Schumacher: A Study in Personality and Political Behavior* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965).

European integration and re-militarization, as it saw both as hardening the division of Germany that had come about as the result of the Cold War in 1949. Since the FRG was a frontline state of the Cold War, it was always difficult for the SPD to delineate its own brand of socialism from the one implemented in East Germany by the communist dictatorship. It was easy, by contrast, for its political adversaries to taint the SPD with the brush of socialism that many associated with the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In fact, the SPD was a staunchly anti-communist party after 1945. The fate of social democracy in East Germany was a stark reminder, if one were needed, that communists were no allies for social democrats. In East Germany members of the SPD were forced to merge with the communists in 1946 to form the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), the ruling party of the GDR. Inside the SED, communists played the leading role at all levels of political decision-making. Only those social democrats who were 100 per cent loyal to the communist cause could advance through its ranks. Dissenting voices were silenced, imprisoned, or forced to leave for West Germany.³⁴ In the FRG, on the other hand, most social democrats supported the banning of the Communist Party in 1956 and the exclusion of communists from the trade unions. Yet, ironically, their anti-communism could not convince the West German electorate that the SPD's brand of socialism was the FRG's future. A popular election poster by the CDU from the 1953 general elections showed a sinister figure with the caption 'All paths of Marxism lead to Moscow.' It was an allusion to the party programme of the SPD that still committed it to Marxism. Hence, the political experiences of the late 1940s and early 1950s convinced more and more social democrats of the need to shed Marxism and put their own variant of socialism on a different ideological footing.

The SPD did precisely this with its 1959 Bad Godesberg programme, which no longer mentioned Marx and the abolition of capitalism and instead saw the SPD based on values inherent in classical philosophy, Christianity, and humanism. Social democrats made their peace with capitalism, but, very much in the tradition of Karl Polanyi's notion of the need to 'embed' capitalism,³⁵ they argued for the need to provide macro-economic political steering and political interventions in the economic sphere. They

34 A. Malycha, *Auf dem Weg zur SED. Die Sozialdemokratie und die Bildung einer Einheitspartei in den Ländern der SBZ* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1996); A. Malycha, *Partei von Stalins Gnaden? Die Entwicklung der SED zur Partei neuen Typs in den Jahren 1946 bis 1950* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz, 1996).

35 K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]).

also backed strong trade unions as a way of protecting workers in a tripartite system that became known as ‘social partnership’ and ‘codetermination’, giving workers’ representatives seats on the governing boards of large and medium-sized firms, and setting up an industrial relations system in which unions and employers settled their conflicts in a spirit of ‘conflictual partnership’,³⁶ with the help of the state if necessary. Social democracy also came to stand for comprehensive welfare provisions; greater equality of opportunities, especially with regard to education and training; subsidies for cultural and sporting events that would allow broader sections of the population to participate in them; and forms of social engineering that were to bring about a more just and more solidaristic society.³⁷ During the 1960s, the SPD managed to increase its share of the vote in national elections considerably. Its popular party leader Willy Brandt, who was a committed anti-fascist, led the party to victory in 1969, when it was able to form a coalition government in alliance with the liberal Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP). Under his leadership, the SPD managed to attract many young people, including many young women. By the mid-1980s, a third of all party members were female, and a third of all office holders inside the party were also women. Influenced by feminism, they championed many women’s rights issues, and the Association of Social Democratic Women, founded in 1973, became one of the most powerful intra-party pressure groups. The reform of the West German anti-abortion laws and the introduction of quotas for women were two of the campaigns that social democratic women pushed very successfully. Willy Brandt, as the first social democratic chancellor of the FRG, gave an iconic first speech as chancellor in which he announced that his government would ‘dare to wage more democracy’ at all levels of German society. It was the start of a comprehensive reform programme that was to liberalize German society in many areas. Brandt also embarked on a policy of détente with communist eastern Europe that was aimed primarily at building better relations between the two Germanies in the interest of the people living on either side of the East–West German border. Ironically, given his pedigree as a reformer and liberal, it was also under his chancellorship that the Anti-Radical Decree (Radikalenerlaß) was passed in 1972, in the context of a left-wing terrorist threat, which legalized the dismissal from state employment

36 The term ‘Konfliktpartnerschaft’ was coined by W. Müller-Jentsch, *Konfliktpartnerschaft. Akteure und Institutionen der industriellen Beziehungen* (Munich: Hampp Verlag, 1991).

37 K. Klotzbach, *Der Weg zur Staatspartei. Programmatik, praktische Politik und Organisation der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1945–1965* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1982).

of those who did not adhere to the West German constitution. It was aimed, above all, against communists and left-wing radicals, and was often compared to a political witch-hunt, resulting in an atmosphere of suspicion and persecution, although ultimately very few people were not employed or dismissed as a result of the decree.³⁸

Not everyone was happy with the SPD's abandonment of Marxism. Its student organization (the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, SDS) was eventually disaffiliated from the party in 1961 and replaced with a more moderate one (the Sozialdemokratischer Hochschulbund, SHB), as the former had steadfastly opposed the party's acceptance of capitalism. Many of its activists became active in the student protest movement of the 1960s. A German New Left emerged as part of an international New Left that sought to steer a middle road between communism and social democratic reformism. Its intellectuals provided important critiques of capitalism that informed student politics in the 1960s and kept alive an anti-capitalist tradition that nevertheless remained critical of Soviet-style communism. The political mobilization of the student protests fed into three important political developments of the 1970s. First, it led to the rise of left-wing terrorism. Secondly, it contributed to the rise of the so-called 'new social movements' from the 1970s onwards. Thirdly, many 1968ers rejoined the SPD of Willy Brandt in order to start their 'march through the institutions', that is, their attempt to contribute to the reforms announced by the Brandt government. The influx of theoretically minded and left-wing university graduates into the party often led to conflicts in local and regional party organizations between more traditional working-class activists and the new radicals. In some cases, famously in Frankfurt am Main and Munich, but also elsewhere, it threatened to rip the party apart and led to serious factional infighting, ultimately weakening the entire party apparatus and giving the SPD a negative public image, which in turn manifested itself in poor election results.

The oil crisis of 1973 in hindsight marks the end of the long economic boom period after the end of the Second World War. It restricted the degree to which the social democratic government could expand the West German welfare state further and instead made it necessary to think about forms of economic crisis management. Willy Brandt resigned in 1974 over a massive espionage scandal, when one of his close advisors, Günter Guillaume, was revealed to be a spy of the East German secret police, the Stasi. Brandt's

38 B. Faulenbach, *Das sozialdemokratische Jahrzehnt. Von der Reformeuphorie zur Neuen Unübersichtlichkeit. Die SPD 1969–1982* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2011).

successor, Helmut Schmidt, was a more centrist and more pragmatic politician, less able to integrate the left back into the SPD, but also popular because he managed to steer the FRG through the rough waters of economic recession relatively successfully.³⁹ Under Schmidt, the SPD came to campaign under the slogan of 'Modell Deutschland' ('Model Germany'). In the late 1970s Schmidt embarked on a course of conflict with the left wing of the SPD and the mass peace movement when he became one of the masterminds of a massive re-armament programme of NATO. By the early 1980s he had also lost the trust of wider sections of his coalition partner, the FDP, which had transformed itself from a bastion of progressive left liberalism in the 1960s to the advance guard of neoliberalism in Germany. They allowed the opposition CDU to stage a successful constructive vote of no confidence in the social democratic chancellor in 1982. New elections in 1983 confirmed Helmut Kohl as the CDU chancellor, now in alliance with a revamped FDP. In opposition again, the SPD moved to the political left, with several of the so-called 'grandchildren' of Willy Brandt leading the party in a direction that sought to build bridges with the new social movements and the Green Party.⁴⁰ Yet the party also struggled with the neoliberal zeitgeist of the 1980s that amounted to a direct attack on some of the key pillars in the social democratic identity as it had emerged in the post-Bad Godesberg era, in particular macro-economic steering and economic interventionism, but also social engineering and an extensive welfare state.

Social Democracy in Unified Germany after 1990

The fall of communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s came as a surprise to many political observers. On the left, the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union had raised the hope that communism would become more democratic and pluralistic; a hope reinforced by the Western communist parties' move towards Eurocommunism in the 1980s. A global re-alignment of left-wing political forces seemed possible. The failure of reform communism and the triumphalism of Western capitalism ended that hope and put the left on the defensive. When the protests in East Germany got bigger and bigger and when the chants of 'We are the people' turned into 'We are one people', the SPD was cautious about endorsing demands for reunification. For

39 G. Hofmann, *Helmut Schmidt: Soldat, Kanzler, Ikone* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2016).

40 A. S. Markovits and P. S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

many social democrats one of the key lessons from German history was that a unified Germany in the middle of Europe was good neither for Germans nor for other Europeans (at least, this is what the period between 1871 and 1945 seemed to teach). Hence, many favoured a two-state solution, with a reformed democratic GDR retaining its independence as a state. Yet the SPD did not speak with one voice here, as Willy Brandt and others endorsed the desire of many East Germans for reunification. Several dissidents in the GDR refounded the SPD on the territory of the GDR on 7 October 1989 in Schwante near Berlin. East German social democrats found it easier to deal with the Brandt wing of the West German party than with his 'grandchildren'. The latter tended to have had few contacts with East Germany before 1989 and were oriented more towards western Europe and the European Union. Hence, there was often a huge gap in understanding and habitus. Ultimately events in the GDR made the western SPD's position vis-à-vis reunification redundant. There was no mass support in the GDR for the continuation of this failed state. Only a few intellectuals favoured it, whilst the rest refused to be guinea pigs for what they perceived as, at best, another social experiment. Hence, Helmut Kohl and the CDU became reunification heroes in the East, and East Germans thanked Kohl by presenting him with electoral victory in the first all-German elections in 1990. On the territory of the old West Germany, the SPD under Oskar Lafontaine would have been able to form a coalition government with the Greens to head a first 'red-green' coalition. But the votes from the East pushed Kohl across the winning line and allowed him to continue in government. The electoral debacle for the SPD in the East had already been foreshadowed in the first free elections to the East German parliament, the Volkskammer, in the spring of 1990. Some of the East German areas, in particular Saxony, had been bulwarks of social democracy until 1933.⁴¹ However, nothing was left of these traditions after sixty years of national socialism and communism. Still today, the SPD in the 'new' federal states of the former GDR often remains at best the third or fourth political force behind the CDU and the post-communist party, today named Die Linke (The Left), and often also now behind the right-wing populists, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).

Despite its defeat in 1990, the SPD stuck to its left-wing course and was able to form the first 'red-green' coalition after the election victory of 1997. Gerhard Schröder became chancellor and Oskar Lafontaine a kind of super-minister

41 J. Retallack, *Red Saxony: Election Battles and the Spectre of Democracy in Germany, 1860–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

uniting the finance and economics ministries. Yet Schröder and Lafontaine did not see eye to eye over the course of the government, with the latter favouring a far more dirigiste and interventionist economic policy in wanting to introduce tough regulation for financial services and an ambitious programme of macro-economic steering. When he could not push this through, he resigned all his ministerial and party posts and withdrew temporarily from political life. The door was now open for what some analysts have described as the neoliberalization of the SPD, epitomized by reductions in welfare state spending and a new unemployment insurance system, known as the Hartz reforms, that many criticized as providing a poor deal for people confronted with unemployment. The Hartz reforms were unpopular within the SPD, as were attempts by Schröder to align himself more firmly with the neoliberal course of his party friend in Britain, Tony Blair. The joint paper by the Labour Party and the SPD, authored by Peter Mandelson and Bodo Hombach, was hardly recognized in Britain and met with harsh criticism from many social democratic local associations.⁴² The deregulation of labour markets and financial services and the reduction of social protection for employees threw the SPD into a major identity crisis, as it no longer seemed to stand for the 'ordinary people', the '*kleine Leute*'. Schröder's extravagant personal style, featuring the smoking of cigars, the wearing of fur coats, and a penchant for expensive wines, did little to convey a different image. Ever since Schröder lost the elections to Angela Merkel in 2005, the SPD has been searching for a new identity, whilst its share of the vote has been falling consistently to a low of well below 20 per cent (at the time of writing). It can no longer be said to be a 'people's party'.⁴³

Conclusion

The SPD is the oldest political party in Germany today. When its predecessors emerged in the 1860s, they were among the first mass socialist parties in the world. Over more than 150 years the SPD stood for democracy and social justice. In the nineteenth century it was the most decisive force for more democracy – in politics and in wider society. Its ongoing subjection to discrimination and persecution by the state and the middle classes made the SPD turn to Marxism and a commitment to abolish capitalism. Yet already in imperial Germany that

42 F. Unger, A. Wehr, and K. Schoenwaelder, *New Democrats, New Labour, Neue Mitte* (Berlin: Espresso Verlag, 1998).

43 T. Grunden, M. Janetzki, and J. Salandi, *Die SPD. Anamnese einer Partei* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017).

revolutionary ambition sat uneasily with a reformist practice. With the division between social democracy and communism, the SPD renewed its commitment to liberal democracy in delineation from the dictatorial practices of communism. During the Weimar Republic and in exile its stance on liberal democracy remained ambiguous, but those social democrats in favour of the parliamentary road to socialism increasingly dominated the party. Its abandonment of Marxism in the Cold War world of the 1950s was the logical outcome not just of strategic considerations but also of a reorientation away from abolishing and towards embedding capitalism. The solidaristic values that characterized the party from its beginnings included the SPD's championing of women's rights and of the rights of ethnic minorities, even if, on occasion, the party was not immune to bouts of misogynistic and racist sentiments. Those, however, never became official party policy. Its declared internationalism also made the SPD an ardent critic of nationalist positions. Again, there were moments in time where nationalism got the better of social democrats, especially in August 1914, but on balance they tended to search for an enlightened patriotism, struggling at times with what was always a slippery slope between the ideal cases of patriotism and nationalism. In the heyday of social democracy in the 1960s and 1970s, it seemed successfully to mould capitalism in its image and it promised a more socially just capitalism that would work not just for the wealthy few but also for the overwhelming majority of society. The advances of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s belied that optimism and, although Germany can hardly be described as a neoliberal haven during those decades, the key foundations of social democracy were weakened: advocating social engineering, macro-economic steering, and an expansive welfare state seemed no longer to promise a glorious future but instead came to stand for a failed past. Jumping onto the bandwagon of neoliberalism in the 1990s and 2000s left the SPD stranded in a no-man's land where it no longer stood for anything. Its electoral decline to a medium-sized party was the result of this lack of an identifiable brand.

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Social Democracy in Austria

HELMUT KONRAD

In the Habsburg Monarchy

The Habsburg monarchy, which disintegrated into several individual states in 1918 as a result of the First World War, was indeed an anachronistic entity in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, it was certainly also able to point to its strengths. Keeping 53 million people who used thirteen different languages and belonged to the most diverse religions loyal to the monarchy at a time when strong nation-states (German or Italian unification) were emerging and at the same time facilitating a modernization process was an amazing achievement. The cohesion of the empire was guaranteed by the person of the emperor, who ruled from 1848 to 1916, by the military, and by the bureaucracy, but also by the Catholic Church and Judaism, for the latter of which this half century had retrospectively been a 'golden age'. Also, the young working-class movement proved to be a strong pillar of the multinational state. Unlike all other political groups, it did not take a narrow national perspective; rather, its peculiarity lay in the analysis of the national question and in the development of models for the reconstruction and rescue of the multinational entity.

In addition, the social democracy of the Habsburg monarchy emerged almost simultaneously with the trade union organizations. This stands in contrast to Britain, where trade union organizations arose long before the political party, but also in contrast to Russia, where the party was the political precursor of trade unions. Victor Adler called the two organizations 'Siamese twins'. This particular feature, which provided the Austrian social democrats with a solid material foundation, was at the same time also a weak point, because, unlike the political party, the unions, which were organizing labour disputes on the ground, were

much more open to accepting national positions and to perceiving non-German-speaking workers as wage-crushing competition.¹

With the antisemitic narrowing of the liberal camp in the Habsburg monarchy, social democracy was a widely used anchorage for the sizeable group of largely assimilated Jewish intellectuals. Although they could not be denied an enthusiasm for 'German culture', they were sensitive to national problems in the multi-ethnic state due to their own ambivalent identity structure. The party was a construction of persons with different language backgrounds. This involvement of an intellectual elite made it possible at the turn of the year 1888/9 to lead to fruition the hitherto rudimentary attempts to found a successful party. The Hainfeld party congress of 1 January 1889 is regarded as the birth of Austrian social democracy. If the workers' movement had previously gone through stages of anarchist, syndicalist, or even cultural organization attempts (reading clubs, singing societies),² now a political force emerged: a political party in connection with the unions and internal educational organizations with high standards.

The young party achieved its first truly great success in the large and peaceful demonstration on 1 May 1890, the 'first first of May', in which all the bourgeois fears of the rampaging underclasses proved unfounded.³ The Austrian workers showed strength and discipline and won the public space.

At the same time, an influential press was created. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (*Worker's Newspaper*) was the central organ, subscription to which was considered the membership fee to the Social Democratic Labour Party. From 1907, the new theoretical periodical *Der Kampf* (*The Struggle*)⁴ developed into an organ that decisively shaped the destiny of social democracy beyond the borders of the monarchy. The school of Austromarxism was born. The focus was on dealing with the national issue, the attempt to reconcile an internationalist claim with the nationally charged mood in the Habsburg monarchy.⁵

The main representatives of Austromarxism primarily argued theoretically, as did Otto Bauer in particular, or tried, like Victor Adler, to strike a balance to keep the national groupings on board. The proportion of Jewish

1 R. Löw, *Der Zerfall der 'Kleinen Internationale'. Nationalitätenkonflikte in der Arbeiterbewegung des alten Österreich (1889–1914)* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1984).

2 H. Konrad, *Das Entstehen der Arbeiterklasse in Oberösterreich* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1981).

3 H. Troch, *Rebellensonntag. Der 1. Mai zwischen Politik, Arbeiterkultur und Volksfest in Österreich (1890–1918)* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1991).

4 *Der Kampf. Sozialdemokratische Monatsschrift*. First published in 1907.

5 H. Konrad, *Die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1976).

intellectuals in the theoretical discourse was impressive and probably also dominant. Political solutions to the question of nationality, on the other hand, rather came from non-Jewish circles, for instance from Karl Renner⁶ or Etbin Kristan, the leading political figure from Slovenia. However, all analyses began relatively late, in fact, only in the last decade before the First World War. It was therefore necessary to make the national situation, which had already been shattered in some places, especially in the trade union organizations, the starting point for their reflections. Yet, right up to the present, the considerations of social democrats of that time are the basis for analysis of identity and nation issues.

A deficit in the discourses of these years, however, is the extensive exclusion of gender issues. Adelheid Popp, a female worker, managed to expand the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, that is to say, the official party organ, with an *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* (*Female Worker's Newspaper*) from 1892 and to ascend to the party executive committee. But, despite her friendship even with Friedrich Engels and August Bebel, she remained a kind of fig leaf in the strictly patriarchal structure of Austrian social democracy.⁷

In day-to-day politics the fight for universal suffrage was the order of the day. However, for now it was about universal male suffrage only. This struggle lasted more than half a century, beginning with the 1848 Revolution and the gradual expansion of the curial suffrage. In 1907, the revolutionary events in Russia eventually led to the introduction of universal suffrage for men over twenty-four years of age, who had been in possession of Austrian citizenship for at least three years, and who could prove residency for at least one year. Social democracy had fought for this in mass demonstrations. Social democracy was able to quadruple the number of seats it had already achieved in the General Electoral Court (*Allgemeine Wählerkurie*) and became the second-largest parliamentary group in the Austrian Reichsrat. The new delegates also made the pilgrimage to the Hofburg for the speech from the throne of the old emperor. The term 'k.k. Social Democracy' (k.k. means 'imperial and royal') thus had a real basis. In 1911, the social democrats became the strongest faction in the newly elected Reichsrat. However, the nationality conflicts no longer stopped at the limits of political movements. In 1912, the Czechs split off as the first group in the national assembly to form a national faction. The former unique selling point of social democracy, as the

6 Synopticus [Karl Renner], *Staat und Nation* (Vienna: Dietl, 1899).

7 A. Popp, *The Autobiography of a Working Woman*, trans. F. C. Harvey, Introduction A. Bebel and J. Ramsay Macdonald (London: Fisher Unwin, 1913).

only political force to act across language barriers, was showing its first cracks.

In the following decades it would turn out to be a stroke of luck that the Austrian National Assembly had already been suspended at the outbreak of the First World War. Thus, social democracy in Austria was spared a vote on the approval of war loans, which in Germany had sown the seeds for the later split. Nevertheless, Austrian social democrats, despite individual counter-opinions, contributed to the war. Many of the younger party officials were also active at the front.

The Austrian Revolution

However, the political fault lines that German social democracy had to face were also reflected in Austrian social democracy, albeit to a lesser extent. Also, in the Habsburg monarchy there was a group around Karl Renner which actively tried to shape the politics of the war years. Next to it there was the opposition, which vehemently opposed the suspension of parliament. Their actions culminated on 21 October 1916 in the assassination of the then Prime Minister Karl Stürgkh by Friedrich Adler, the son of the party founder Victor Adler.⁸ Friedrich Adler considered Renner's political position a petit bourgeois attitude, far from the principles of the Second International.

Friedrich Adler was sentenced to death, but finally pardoned to a prison sentence of eighteen years. The end of the war brought him freedom, and henceforth he devoted himself to rebuilding the Socialist International. With the assassination he had achieved the reconvening of the Reichstag. Also, as the son of the undisputed and mediating party leader, he had not drifted so far from the other currents of social democracy that a party split in Austria would have been on the political agenda. On the contrary, in October and November 1918, Austrian social democracy was able to take the lead and to control those events that can be called the 'Austrian Revolution'.

Finally, military demobilization was the driving force of the revolution. If democratic and national revolutions had created new political frameworks in the successor states, it was the returning frontline soldiers who, together with the revolting mass of workers, tried to force far-reaching political changes.

It was ultimately Karl Renner from the right wing of the party who managed, together with the Christian Socialists under Ignaz Seipel, to persuade

8 R. Ardel, *Friedrich Adler. Probleme einer Persönlichkeitsentwicklung um die Jahrhundertwende* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1984).

the young Emperor Karl to renounce his share in the business of government. All rights of the emperor were transferred to the Council of State. The election of a constituent National Assembly and the re-election of state and local representatives would be possible under universal suffrage for all citizens without distinction of sex. Women's suffrage was thus in force, and women, especially social democrats, were to have a decisive say in the fate of the young state.

When the Provisional National Assembly met on 12 November 1918, and the red–white–red flag flew for the first time in front of the parliament building, a mass demonstration took place almost simultaneously with the proclamation of the republic, and agitated revolutionaries tore the white stripe from the flag. Shots were fired and two people were killed. The Assembly announced in Article 1 that Deutschösterreich (German Austria) should be a democratic republic, but already in Article 2 it was stated that 'Deutschösterreich is part of the German Republic'. This seemed to be the realization of the right to self-determination as proclaimed by President Wilson.

Regardless of this, the fight on the street was not yet decided. Squads led by returnees from captivity in Russia organized themselves in Red Guards, and in individual factories workers' councils promoted the revolution. Hunger drove the masses into the arms of the revolutionaries; the revolution seemed to shift from a political to a social one. On 18 April 1919, Holy Thursday, hungry people threw themselves onto the fallen horses of the security guard detail and tore the warm flesh from the bodies of the animals.

The fear of a continuing revolution provided the social democrats with an opportunity. Only with their direction of the labour movement could one expect to steer the revolutionary energies into democratic channels. And the Social Democratic Workers' Party, whose undisputed leader Victor Adler had died the day before the proclamation of the republic, guided by Otto Bauer, made the best of the situation. It had been recognized that, in the face of the peace negotiations in Paris,⁹ only a democratic state had the chance of being treated reasonably fairly. Therefore, the task was to domesticate the revolution and to use the extra-parliamentary threat in parliament to establish a welfare state. The fact that the labour movement was still united (the communists never gained a seat either in the National Assembly of the First Republic or on the Vienna City Council) was due to the specific nature of Austromarxism, which succeeded in combining revolutionary language with reformist practice.

9 H. Konrad, 'Saint-Germain', in W. Maderthaner (ed.), *Österreich. 99 Dokumente, Briefe, Urkunden* (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2018), pp. 370–5.

It was Minister of Social Affairs Ferdinand Hanusch who, under these circumstances, was able to pass social legislation in the National Assembly that could be regarded as exemplary, and which could be realized mainly because the spectre of a continued revolution caused the conservatives not to take a counter-position. Within two years, a modern health insurance system was set up, social insurance was expanded, and a statutory holiday entitlement was asserted. Working hours were reduced dramatically to 48 hours per week, and collective agreements guaranteed a statutory minimum wage. Child labour was banned, as well as night work for women. The revolutionary workers' councils became the works councils, which now held in their hands the instruments for internal co-operation. Finally, a Chamber of Workers and Employees was set up, an Austrian peculiarity which guaranteed the participation of workers' representatives in the development of laws.¹⁰

However, the overall political situation had changed. Austria had to ratify the peace treaty of Saint-Germain in October 1919, and the threat of calling workers onto the streets had worn out over the months. Conservative Austria gained the upper hand, and the hegemony of the left was broken. The social democrat-led coalition collapsed. It did still manage to push the constitution, designed by Hans Kelsen and Karl Renner,¹¹ through parliament, but after the elections of 1920 social democracy had no option but to go into opposition.

Red Vienna

Vienna has an outstanding position in Austria. Already in the late monarchy, when Vienna was one of the largest cities in the Western world, it was the capital of a multi-ethnic state, a multinational melting pot, and an international hotspot of science and art. Vienna around 1900 brought personalities such as Robert Musil, Karl Kraus, Arthur Schnitzler, Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ernst Mach, Karl Popper, Carl Menger, Hans Kelsen, Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, Arnold Schönberg, Gustav Mahler, Theodor Herzl, and many others together. And after the First World War, the construction of 'Red Vienna'

¹⁰ W. Göhring and B. Pellar, *Ferdinand Hanusch. Aufbruch zum Sozialstaat* (Vienna: ÖGB Verlag, 2003).

¹¹ W. Maderthaner, 'Die Kelsen-Verfassung', in Maderthaner (ed.), *Österreich. 99 Dokumente, Briefe, Urkunden*, pp. 376–9.

again attracted worldwide attention, from the United States even to the British royal house.¹²

At the same time, the city was heavily affected by the First World War. About 120,000 Viennese had lost their lives at the front or at home due to the raging Spanish flu; hunger and misery prevailed. The Wienerwald and the parks were cut down for heating purposes. Tuberculosis was called the 'Viennese disease' at that time. Thousands of children survived only because they found shelter with host families in Switzerland, Denmark, or the Netherlands. Homeless soldiers populated the train stations and the suburbs, they had their *Heimatrecht* (right of domicile) in Galicia or Bukovina, but could not or did not want to return there.

The war had also changed the political landscape in the city. Until 1919, first the liberals, and then, for a long time, the conservatives under Karl Lueger had ruled the city. Now, at the end of the war, it was the social democrats. Already in 1919, they achieved 54 per cent of the votes. Vienna had become 'red', and with growing popular support and certainly also with the support of the educational and cultural elites, it would remain so until the elimination of democracy. With 100 of 165 mandates social democracy dominated the local council. Eight women entered the council, a rather modest share, which improved only tentatively over the years. Also, in 1919, the first women moved into the Austrian National Assembly; politics, however, remained male-dominated.

Vienna was still part of the province of Lower Austria in 1919, and it took until the beginning of 1922 for the city to become an independent province. Thereby it gained the possibility to support the plans of the now responsible social democracy through its own tax system. The implementation of the ideas for a 'new city' had, however, already begun in 1919. Mayor Jakob Reumann set the course for the construction of at least 5,000 social housing apartments per year and for a fundamental reform of the health care system. Art and culture were also to be made accessible to the masses.

It was conspicuous that the withdrawal of the 'Austrian Revolution' to the design of a social democratic city was actually carried out not by young revolutionaries, the 'Bauvolk der kommenden Welt' ('builders of the world to come'),¹³ but by pragmatic, often older, experts. Julius Tandler, in whose hands the health service of the city lay, was already fifty. He was

12 H. Konrad and G. Hauch (eds.), *Hundert Jahre Rotes Wien. Die Zukunft einer Geschichte* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2019). See also Shelton Stromquist, Chapter 16, this volume.

13 W. Neugebauer, *Bauvolk der kommenden Welt. Geschichte der sozialistischen Jugendbewegung in Österreich* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1975).

a distinguished researcher and dean of the medical faculty of the University of Vienna. Hugo Breitner, who as financial city councillor had to build the material foundation, was only four years younger, and had been the director of the Länderbank. Otto Glöckel, who was responsible for the education system, was also a member of this generation. He had been a member of the Reichsrat since 1907 and had previously been a teacher in civilian life. David Josef Bach, the founder of the Workers' Symphonic Concerts, received his doctorate in philosophy in 1897 at the University of Vienna.

The famous Viennese municipal buildings¹⁴ were realized by no fewer than 190 architects, of whom only 20 were young employees of the social democratic city administration. No less than thirty-three came from the school of Otto Wagner. Therefore, the building programme was not about the radically new, about the filling of a vacuum, as demonstrated by the Bauhaus in Dessau, but about solid, formally more conservative, design. This also exemplifies the difference from the other political upheavals in Europe. In Vienna, it was not about destroying and rebuilding, but about appropriation and democratization. Red Vienna was not a holistic alternative plan to previous epochs, but was built upon them and strove for a fairer distribution of material and cultural resources.

The 'Breitner taxes', which were luxury taxes, but above all targeted the capital gains achieved by the increase in the value of real estate, made the realization of the reform programme possible. Even though Vienna had lost 350,000 inhabitants during the war, there were overcrowded, overpriced, and health-endangering rental barracks, and about 30,000 households in shanty towns on the outskirts of the city. In a decade, Red Vienna created decent housing for 300,000 people. This municipal housing construction is 'the actual symbolic and the real core of Viennese municipal socialism'.¹⁵ With the decision to build large blocks of flats on land owned by the city, they realized the maximum possible within the given situation. While the apartment buildings had an average building density of 85 per cent, a maximum density of 30 per cent was now realized. At the Karl-Marx-Hof, the icon of Viennese municipal housing construction, it was only 18.4 per cent. The apartments were rather small but had a bathroom and toilet inside. The courtyards offered a broad infrastructure, from kindergartens to outpatient clinics, from shops to swimming pools, from libraries to post offices. Little room remained for alternative ways of life, different from the nuclear family concept.

¹⁴ E. Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919–1934* (Boston: MIT Press, 1999).

¹⁵ W. Maderthaner, 'Von der Zeit um 1860 bis zum Jahr 1945', in P. Csendes and F. Oppl (eds.), *Wien. Geschichte einer Stadt* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), vol. III, pp. 175–544.

Julius Tandler's efforts had largely defeated tuberculosis and successfully put the health care system on a new footing. From maternal counselling and a baby package to sports facilities, he formed a secure framework for life from the cradle to the grave, which was efficiently concluded with a cremation and urn at the cemetery. Tandler, like most of the decision-makers, stood in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon social reformers. Politics was done for the people rather than with the people. However, the reality of life was often still difficult. Women also had to work, and Käthe Leichter, one of the leading minds of the newly established Chamber of Labour, analysed and documented the fate of these women.¹⁶ Only more educated people could fit into the proclaimed ideal of the 'new man' in the secondary school and student organizations. Here also were the educated Jewish middle classes, writers such as Jura Soyfer and students, who would play important roles later in emigration. And here, too, the gender roles were different. Marie Jahoda, the famous social researcher, wore a bob hairstyle in the 1920s, sometimes wore trousers, went climbing with friends, like them, did not drink alcohol, and lived in a comradeship, equal partnership.¹⁷

The experiment of Red Vienna did not fail from the inside. It was attacked economically and politically and was ultimately brought to collapse. The global economic crisis, but particularly the reactionary policies of the Austrian government, leading to the threat of, and ultimately the use of, armed force, destroyed a model for a truly decent and peaceful alternative way of life.

Socialism in the Countryside

'There was Vienna and there was the rest of Austria', Marie Jahoda said in retrospect in an interview. That was certainly true with regard to her way of life, because there were practically no 'new people' outside the metropolis. The framework conditions for social democratic politics were quite different there. People lived in the federal states with almost entirely Catholic-conservative majorities. In the few cities dominated by the social democrats, like Graz and Linz, there was no possibility of collecting their own taxes and there was a lack of a progressive Judaism and an intellectual environment comparable to the capital. Nevertheless, it was possible to copy some

16 K. Leichter, *So leben wir ... 1320 Industriearbeiterinnen berichten über ihr Leben. Eine Erhebung* (Vienna: Verlag 'Arbeit und Wirtschaft', 1932).

17 G. Hauch, "'... da war Wien und da war das restliche Österreich". Anmerkungen zu den Geschlechterverhältnissen im Roten Wien', in H. Konrad and G. Hauch (eds.), *Hundert Jahre Rotes Wien. Die Zukunft einer Geschichte* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2019), pp. 53–77.

elements of Red Vienna, for example, in the residential construction of the cities. These programmes were more modest, but nonetheless still shape the cityscapes today.

The organizational structure was consolidated in Vienna; social democracy had also committed its members to the party through its material achievements. The information network was dense, and Austromarxism penetrated the party base through broad offers of political and cultural education, further than other Western parties managed to do. Social democracy offered a concept with great incentives: it had transformed the city and turned it into a social democratic model.

But outside Vienna there were industrial villages and smaller towns with a dominant industry. The heavy industry area of Upper Styria wanted to advance the revolution as early as 1918/19; Otto Bauer had to travel there to get the workers back on the party's reformist course. Koloman Wallisch, a participant in the experiment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, had fled to Styria, where he became state secretary, member of the National Assembly, and commander of the *Republikanischer Schutzbund* (Republican Defence League). Regionally, there were strong social democratic anchors, not only in Styria, but



Fig. 2.1 Muster of the *Republikanischer Schutzbund* (the paramilitary organization of Austrian social democracy), Wiener Neustadt, 1928. (Photograph by Lothar Rübelt/Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

also in Upper Austria. These were not so much committed to the theory of Austromarxism as to the social practice of the struggle for justice. The radical potential was relatively high: people were more ready to act than in the metropolis.

A completely different type of social democratic party, however, developed in the less industrialized federal states. It was rather petit bourgeois and nationally socialized, based on a kind of 'teacher socialism' that did not curtail antisemitism and thus still rejected the party leadership in Vienna. The social, anti-clerical, and German-national lining that was, for instance, particularly pronounced in Carinthia, where social democracy was numerically very strong, made it possible, on the one hand, to reject Catholic-conservative Austria sharply, even in an actionist and combative manner. At the same time, it also led to an easier transition towards national socialism. The federal states were also contradictory within themselves, which would ultimately be expressed in different behaviour patterns in the conflicts in the interwar period.

The Path into the Abyss

The society of the First Republic had, primarily due to the experience of the young men at the front, undermined the state's monopoly on violence and had brought physical violence back on the agenda, also outside the framework of legal regulations. The peace treaty of Saint-Germain allowed the young republic a professional army of only 30,000 men. Many soldiers returning home had not given up their weapons because they did not feel committed to the young republic and the social democratic minister for military affairs, who in their eyes was a 'Jewish-Bolshevik' revolutionary. They defended their villages against looting and acted violently in ongoing border disputes. From these 'home protection units', the Heimwehr (homeland guard) was formed, which eventually comprised 100,000 men. From the social democratic stewards and the former soldiers' councils, social democracy recruited the Republikanischer Schutzbund with at least 80,000 men as a counterweight to the Heimwehr. The military units of the political camps thus achieved six times the strength of the Federal Army, albeit with much weaker armament. Conflicts on the streets were predestined in this constellation.

In his pioneering work on violence in the First Republic,¹⁸ Gerhard Botz calculated that even before the outbreak of the Austrian civil war, that is,

¹⁸ G. Botz, *Gewalt in der Politik. Attentate, Zusammenstöße, Putschversuche, Unruhen in Österreich 1918 bis 1938* (Munich: W. Fink, 1983).

from November 1918 to 11 February 1934, no fewer than 215 people were killed on Austria's streets, victims of fighting between the military units. If you add the victims of February 1934 and the political victims of the Ständestaat (corporative state), the number rises to 836. Even though this number is not completely corroborated, it still means that every eight days there was one death due to political unrest, if calculated over the entire lifespan of the First Republic.

However, one incident still stands out from the chain of bloody events. It started in a small village dominated by the social democrats in Burgenland, called Schattendorf. In a situation that was quite common at the time, the assembly of a group and a counter-demonstration on the other side, the conservative combatant organization held an assembly in an inn, while the social democratic counter-demonstration dominated the only village street. Shots were suddenly fired from inside the inn, fatally wounding an invalid and a child. The three shooters were arrested and handed over to the judiciary. In the follow-up to this incident, a fight over the prerogative of interpretation of the events of Schattendorf started in the media.

The trial was conducted in Vienna and took place before a jury. Jury courts were an old demand of social democracy as an alternative to 'class justice'. The charges were based on intent to murder and thus excluded the less serious charge, namely, excessive shooting in self-defence. Seven out of twelve jurors accepted the version of events proposed by the prosecutor, but the required two-thirds majority was thereby missed. An acquittal was announced, which took place on 14 July 1927. A mass protest followed. Social democracy fell victim to its basic political stance, the revolutionary language that allowed for no alternative left of it, coupled with reformist-democratic practice. On 15 July, the workers took the articles in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* literally and gave vent to their agitation. Mass demonstrations stormed the Palace of Justice, penetrated the building, and set files and the building on fire. The police intervened, armed with weapons from the Federal Army. At the end of the day there were 89 dead on the streets of the city centre and over 1,000 injured.

The political confrontation intensified with these events. In 1929, it was still possible to reach a laborious compromise for a constitutional amendment that strengthened the rights of the head of state, but the momentum was moving towards confrontation. The government increased the pressure on Red Vienna, and as the Great Depression hit Austria and hundreds of thousands lost their livelihood, the situation became increasingly radical. On the one hand, the economic scope of action for Red Vienna was

restricted, and, on the other hand, the national socialists gained massive support and became a power factor in domestic politics.

In this situation, the leadership of social democracy remained hesitant. When the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* uncovered in January 1933 that weapons from the First World War were being illegally transported from Italy to Austria, modified in the Hirtenberg ammunition factory, and then delivered to the reactionary Hungarian Horthy regime, and when Hitler was appointed chancellor in Germany, they decided to wait and see. However, when, on 4 March 1933, all three presidents of the national assembly resigned in a parliamentary session and the rules of procedure had no solution for this case, Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss spoke of the 'self-elimination of the parliament' and thus effectively ended the parliamentary phase of the First Republic. Now a *coup d'état* followed in instalments. The Constitutional Court was paralysed, freedom of assembly and the press was restricted, the Communist Party, the national socialists, and the *Schutzbund* were banned.

The Social Democratic Party acted hesitantly. Red lines were drawn only with regard to the ban on the party, the ban on free trade unions, and the destruction of the Vienna city government. So, the party left the conservatives a lot of room for manoeuvre. Weapons searches and confiscations weakened the *Schutzbund* and many disappointed young leftists migrated to the communists (some also to the actionist Nazis). The Communist Party of Austria (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*, KPÖ), of no importance as a legal party, in illegality became one of the main forces, if not the determining force, of the political left.

The Beacon: 12 February 1934

Seen from abroad, historians of socialism inevitably focus first on the events of February 1934.¹⁹ However, some scholars tend to idealize this uprising. This is true above all for the image of the non-divided left in Austria. The right to sole representation of a left-wing party had given social democracy great political assertiveness in the early years of the First Republic and had provided the power to shape the metropolis. But this monopoly was broken at the latest in 1933, when many leftists, disappointed by the party's hesitant policies, turned to the communists or left-wing factions. The fights in February were ultimately a common uprising of the political left, but also

19 W. Maderthaner, 'Drei Tage im Februar', in Maderthaner (ed.), *Österreich. 99 Dokumente, Briefe, Urkunden*, pp. 422–7.

the erosion of the big old party was accelerated. The image of social democrats and communists fighting side by side aroused 'the imagination and hopes of many left and communist writers, among them Friedrich Wolf, Brecht, Becker, Herzfelde and Otto Maria Graf'.²⁰ This is especially true for Anna Seghers and her text 'The Last Path of Koloman Wallisch', probably written at the suggestion of Willi Münzenberg, in which the unity of the working class was evoked.²¹ It also applies to the naming of a battalion in the Spanish Civil War as '12. Februar', but there, as in Austrian reality, fierce factional disputes took place behind the conjured image of unity.

In Austria, on 21 January 1934, the government banned the sale of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, deeply wounding the movement. However, it had not crossed the red line drawn by social democracy itself. Gun searches were also increasingly carried out in workers' homes.

Younger social democrats in particular hoped that the willingness to fight mentioned in the Linz party programme of 1926 had not been a phrase of Austromarxist rhetoric. People were ready to fight, even against the will of the party leadership. On 12 February 1934, when the police began to search the party headquarters of Upper Austrian social democrats in Linz for weapons, there was resistance. Richard Bernaschek, the state party secretary, gave the signal. The unplanned and not really organized struggle in Linz quickly spread to other cities. Steyr, St Pölten, Weiz, Graz, Kapfenberg, Bruck an der Mur, Ebensee, and Wörgl, but above all parts of Vienna, became the scene of sometimes bitter fights for several days. However, the signal for the big uprising failed to materialize. The trains were running and there was no sign of a general strike. Parts of the party leadership fled to nearby Czechoslovakia.

The fighting was brutal. From the Hohe Warte, a hill in the northern part of the city, the Federal Army fired at the resistance nests in the Karl-Marx-Hof, and other municipal social buildings were also scenes of bitter fighting. The blood toll was high in Graz and Bruck an der Mur. The number of deaths is historically still controversial; it was between 220 and more than 300 people. After the uprising had been suppressed, the government acted harshly against those whom it regarded as ringleaders. In Vienna, Karl Münichreiter, seriously injured, was taken to the gallows; in Graz, Josef Stanek was executed. The government prolonged the state of emergency

20 H. Konrad, 'The Significance of February 1934 in Austria Both in National and International Context', in H. Konrad and W. Maderthaner (eds.), *Routes into the Abyss: Coping with the Crisis in the 1930s* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 20–32.

21 A. Seghers, *Der Weg durch den Februar* (Paris: Editions du Carrefour, 1935).

and thus the validity of the death penalty until Koloman Wallisch, state secretary in Styria and member of the National Council, was caught and executed. It banned the Social Democratic Party and the Free Trade Unions, and arrested the mayor of Red Vienna, Karl Seitz. Red Vienna was thus history. The government had crossed all the lines that social democracy had previously defined as 'red'.

The fights of February could not have been won under the given conditions. Moreover, despite the large number of victims, they did not play the role of a decisive political-ideological struggle, but rather had the function of being installed as an international icon. It was, after all, and this is undisputed, the first armed resistance against the takeover of a fascist or at least authoritarian anti-democratic movement in Europe. This was linked to the highest risks, namely extinction of the party as a political force and the loss of one's own life. The symbolic content of the struggles was, however, ultimately more important than the desired goal, which was neither clear nor explicitly formulated. The 'defence of democracy' was a part of the Linz programme, but the actual struggle was spontaneous and not an open-ended confrontation. It was lost from the start. Therefore, the February struggles can be read as an impressive step in the gaining of self-respect of parts of Austrian social democracy, with an impact far beyond the country itself.

Illegality, Resistance, and Exile

The proud mass party, which for nearly half a century had set the agenda in Austrian politics, that had fought for the democratization of Austria, and whose concrete politics had created the model of Red Vienna, found itself forced underground. Numerous February fighters and opponents of the regime were detained in the Wöllersdorf detention centre. After the failed Nazi coup attempt in July 1934, they were imprisoned there together with arrested Nazis. Most of the leading social democratic officials had been able to move abroad, with Czechoslovakia as the logical destination from Vienna. Many young social democrats had switched to more radical, more activist left-wing groups, and some had succumbed to the Nazis' wooing. Some went into internal emigration, but a few tried to make a new start. Many men and women from the Republican Defence League fled to the Soviet Union. Several of them volunteered for the Spanish Civil War two years later. Others who stayed in Moscow soon themselves became victims of the Stalinist terror apparatus.

The 'Revolutionary Socialists' (RS) were founded and supported by Otto Bauer from his Brno exile, which was called the International Office of the Austrian

Social Democrats (Auslandsbüro der österreichischen Sozialdemokraten, ALÖS). It was considered necessary to counter Austrofascism at least with a network and with pamphlets. Internal divisions did not make this easier.²² Nevertheless, the RS were active, but their activities were modest compared with the equally illegal communists. The communists, who had been practically meaningless legally, became an illegal left-wing mass party and attracted even more members than in the phase of legal party work. Women played a very important role in the illegal work as couriers and distributors of leaflets, as they were generally considered to be less suspicious.

March 1938 changed the overall situation again. Most of the left were ready to support Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg's attempt to preserve Austria's independence with a referendum, despite the fact that they had suffered oppression and persecution under his government. But he clearly seemed to be the lesser evil compared with the impending takeover by the national socialists. This is remarkable, because until 1933 the social democrats had a passage in their programme stating that unification with Germany was a goal for the Austrians. But now leaflets for the referendum were distributed and the approval of workers in front of the factory gates was sought.

But it was too late. When German troops crossed the border with Austria on 12 March 1938, many of the remaining left fled abroad. Others found themselves in prison and finally in the transports to Dachau. Older functionaries, who had already stayed away from the activities of the revolutionary socialists, remained in their internal emigration or, like Karl Renner with his yes to the Nazi referendum, at least briefly, if certainly not permanently, accommodated the new rulers. Renner, however, was twice the founding father of the Austrian Republic, in 1918 and in 1945.

It was particularly difficult for the Jews, who had largely found their political home on the left. Those who did not manage to flee ended up in the cruel Nazi machinery of extermination. The escape routes were limited. In Czechoslovakia, the Munich Agreement of September 1938 ended the possibility of secure emigration. A few made it to Sweden. In France, where Otto Bauer died on 4 July 1938, people were safe, but only until the outbreak of war. The refugee movement continued south, where the Vichy regime had already detained the Spanish fighters in order to later hand them over to the Nazis. The escape all too often ended in the Pyrenees. If refugees made it to Portugal, they hoped for a visa for the United States or for Great Britain.

22 J. Buttinger, *In the Twilight of Socialism: A History of the Revolutionary Socialists of Austria*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Praeger, 1953).

Emigration thus had a few priority countries. A small group of communists loyal to the party line stayed in Moscow; social democrats around Friedrich Adler or Julius Deutsch gathered in the United States; communists and social democrats sat in London; and Sweden offered protection and security, for example, for Bruno Kreisky.

The respective political environment also influenced the understanding of political work in exile. The communists had committed themselves to a pro-Austrian position even before the *Anschluss* (annexation) and, as it were, invented the 'Austrian nation'.²³ This is how they worked from Moscow and how they acted in London. The social democrats took much longer to accept Austria's statehood as a goal. They saw the solution in a revolutionary change in Germany within the borders after March 1938. But they were actively involved in the fight against Hitler in England and the United States, 'With spades, weapons, and words',²⁴ including in the armies, secret services, and radio stations.

The resistance in Austria itself had numerous victims. This was especially true for women and men who were part of the communist organizational structure, the Rote Hilfe (Red Support). It was precisely this structure that enabled larger groups to be exposed and arrested. Since Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, belonging to a communist organization was considered treason.²⁵ Often, this involved just material help for the families of arrested people or the distribution of illegal pamphlets. Only at the end of the war did the resistance take forms that threatened the regime, such as sabotage, especially to the transport system, and finally resistance by the partisans, especially in the south, supported by members of the Slovenian minority and by the Yugoslav liberation struggle.

Social democrats in the resistance and in exile found it difficult to rethink a 'pan-German revolution' towards the perspective of an independent state of Austria. It was not until 1942 that this change became apparent, which then took shape starting from the Allied Declaration of Moscow of October 1943. A few, like Friedrich Adler, held on to a pan-German anti-fascist future. He considered Austrian statehood, not without good reason, as a crawling out of shared responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi dictatorship. But to see

23 Rudolf [Alfred Klahr], 'Zur nationalen Frage in Österreich', *Weg und Ziel. Blätter für Theorie und Praxis der Arbeiterbewegung*, 2, 3 (Vienna, 1937), pp. 126–33.

24 W. Muchitsch, *Mit Spaten, Waffen und Worten. Die Einbindung österreichischer Flüchtlinge in die britischen Kriegsanstrengungen 1939–1945* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1992).

25 H. Konrad, *Widerstand an Donau und Moldau. KPÖ und KSČ zur Zeit des Hitler–Stalin-Paktes* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1978).

Austria as the 'first victim' would, as a lifelong lie, became the launch platform for the successful politics of the Second Republic.

In the Second Republic

The new Austrian Socialist Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ) emerged in 1945 from the merger of the old social democrats with the revolutionary socialists. However, it had lost its leading minds, and Jews were only cautiously asked to return to Austria from exile. The party thus had largely lost its intellectual charisma. After 1945, however, the communists, who had been so strong during the period of illegality, were again marginalized and assigned the status of a party supported by less than 5 per cent of the electorate. The social democrats' claim to sole representation of the left, however, was no longer due to radical language and theoretical brilliance, but specifically to an increased anti-communism in large parts of the population due to the presence of Soviet occupiers.

The division of Austria into four zones of occupation and the material situation made co-operation between the two major political camps necessary. Initially, out of consideration for the wishes of the occupiers, there was a government which also included the communists. However, a large coalition soon formed that was to shape the country's politics for two decades. In addition, the social partnership established itself as Austria's unique feature in world politics.²⁶ As a precursor, there had been the wage-price agreements of 1947. When a major strike against the fourth agreement started in 1950, it was demonized as a communist coup attempt. Given the events in Prague and the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, this interpretation could be considered justified at its core; this has, however, not been confirmed by research.

Social partnership, grand coalition, anti-communism, and the struggle for a state treaty transformed the two large parties in the country, which had faced each other in the civil war just over a decade earlier, into partners who could divide the republic into spheres of influence. Parallel worlds emerged. Each 'right-wing' sports organization corresponded to a 'left-wing' one, there were two motorists' clubs, and the *Alpenverein* (Alpine Club) was opposed to the *Naturfreunde* (Friends of Nature). The emergence of a third political camp as a pool for former Nazis did not prevent the major parties from campaigning intensively for these *Ehemalige* ('erstwhiles').

26 E. Tálos, *Staatliche Sozialpolitik in Österreich* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1981).

This political system lasted for two decades. However, it started to erode in the 1960s. The party press, including the prestigious *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, was challenged by the new popular dailies and stumbled into a real crisis. Franz Olah, the interior minister and former president of the trade union confederation, was directly (and only partly within the framework of the law) involved in the creation of the *Kronen Zeitung*.²⁷ Additional socialist misjudgements about Austrian federalism led to a defeat in the elections for the left and enabled the formation of a conservative majority government. In opposition, however, the Socialist Party was able to reposition itself, not least because Bruno Kreisky took over the party chairmanship. His modernization programme for the state, his new policies towards women and their entry into central functions, his reduction in the time for military service, his abolition of the abortion ban and other steps in a reform of family policy, his lowering of the voting age, and much more made it possible to establish almost one and a half decades of socialist majority governments after Kreisky's election victory in 1970.²⁸ The party changed its name back to the 'Social Democratic Party'.

Internationally, this period brought Austria back onto the political world map. The trio Willy Brandt, Olof Palme, and Bruno Kreisky shaped the European politics of those years in a social democratic way. The fact that Kreisky became an advocate for the Palestinians despite (or perhaps because of) his Jewish roots was a globally registered political phenomenon.

It is surprising that Austrian social democracy had not dared to instal a party leader with a Jewish family background in the interwar period. Karl Seitz, the mayor of Vienna and the party's 'showcase Aryan', performed this function. Now, however, in a social democracy practically without Jews and in a climate of antisemitism common throughout Austria, it was possible to take the step of presenting a chairman with this family background internally to members, and externally to voters. Success proved the decision to be right.

Kreisky had talented comrades-in-arms. Hertha Firnberg, Austria's great first minister of science, Hannes Androsch, the gifted minister of finance, Christian Broda, the minister of justice, who was able to implement decisive reforms, and above all Johanna Dohnal, champion of women's rights, still the most important icon of the women's movement in Austria. Putting the gender issue, which had been neglected since the party was founded, sustainably on its agenda was a decisive step.

27 H. Konrad and M. Lechner, 'Millionenverwechslung'. Franz Olah, *Kronenzeitung, Geheimdienste* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992).

28 W. Maderthaner, 'Insel der Seligen', in Maderthaner (ed.), *Österreich. 99 Dokumente, Briefe, Urkunden*, pp. 518–25.

However, modernization also reached its limits. The nuclear power plant in Zwentendorf, which had already been constructed and which Bruno Kreisky advocated vehemently, could not be put into operation after a referendum. New political currents, which saw their main field of activity in ecological problems, presented social democracy with new challenges and, above all, poached young people. The political landscape began to change permanently. Old camps broke up. And when heavy industry fell into crisis and the traditional appearance of the proud factory worker became less common, the core electorate of social democracy shrank. Entire industrial regions became desolate. New populist challenges emerged, and the Freedom Party, a very far-right-wing political force, presented itself as the party of those who had lost out because of modernization and soon managed to absorb parts of the former working class.

In 1983, the phase of social democratic majority government ended. Bruno Kreisky resigned, and his successor led a 'small coalition' with the party of the right-wing political fringe for another three years. Since then, a lot has started to move. Formerly extremely stable voting behaviour began to dissolve, and different political constellations, sometimes also under social democratic leadership, became the order of the day. Vienna was able to maintain its special position well, pragmatic in the continuation of the experiment between the wars, and successful in designing a city that was recognized several times as the most livable city in the world. Nevertheless, in the year 2000 the conservatives built a coalition with the nationalist camp for the first time in the Second Republic and were able to rule against the strongest party, which was still social democracy. This event triggered international protests, including the temporary banning and isolation of Austria, but in real terms it meant the end of social democratic hegemony.²⁹ However, a reasonably viable party to the left of social democracy is not in sight.

As in other European countries, social democracy in Austria is now looking for a new mission. It fundamentally shaped the country and thereby decisively improved the living conditions of the masses. It fought for and defended democracy, built the welfare state, and waged the fight against fascism. It has decisively modernized the country, made it socially permeable, and rendered it internationally presentable. The historical merits of social democracy are undisputed, even among political opponents. Without social democracy, Austria would be more backward, poorer, and socially much more unfair. Nevertheless, social democracy is currently looking for a new

29 E. Tálos (ed.), *Die Schwarz–Blaue Wende in Österreich* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2019).

'grand story', a unique selling point that meets the challenges of the twenty-first century. Austrian social democracy is not alone in this endeavour, but is acting in concert with the other European workers' parties.

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Social Democracy in Sweden

JENNY ANDERSSON

Introduction

The Swedish Social Democratic Party (Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti, SAP), founded in 1889, is often considered a quintessential case of social democracy. For a long time, the international literature idealized Swedish social democracy, which, as a state-carrying form of reformist socialism during the post-war age, appeared to have a near-hegemonic position.¹ In fact (apart from in the 1940 election), it only had an absolute majority in the election of 1968 and has always needed to construct social alliances to remain in power, although the face of these has changed significantly from the historic compromises around the ‘people’s home’ to today’s minority governments and the ‘January deal’ of 2018, which saw social democracy accept yet another batch of privatization and substantial tax relief. Why did the SAP achieve this iconic status in global observations of social democracy? It appeared, to observers in both social science and history writing, that the Swedish social democrats had better than others managed to resolve key ideological dilemmas in the relationship between capitalism and socialism, and that the party had found a distinctive ideological approach to the welfare state in reformism. Its welfare statist project was not altogether different from other global variations of organized capitalism, for instance, the German *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* or even French Gaullism, but there remained an idealistic appeal to Swedish social democracy as deeply egalitarian, pragmatic yet principled, and both national in its preoccupation with the Swedish model and rejections of ‘Europe’, but also capable of profound expressions of solidarity with the Global South. The party’s economic pragmatism was

¹ K. Misgeld and K. Molin (eds.), *Creating Social Democracy: A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010); F. Sejersted, *The Age of Social Democracy: Norway and Sweden in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013).

viewed as a success, an element in a successful ideological strategy of building power resources while also channelling the resources of the growth economy towards the working class.² At the same time, this pragmatism has paved the route for an embrace of neoliberalism in more recent decades.³

In much of the social science literature, Swedish social democracy came to embody the very definition of social democracy as a project distinct from socialism, profoundly shaped by the experiences of the North Atlantic region: industrialization, mass workers' parties, strong liberal legacies, and a fecundity for social compromise and socialist–agrarian alliances.⁴ The orientation towards the welfare state was in many ways the result of these constellations and meant both strengths and weaknesses over time. This chapter will propose that a focus on Sweden is a pertinent way of discussing definitions of social democracy, as part of a larger spectrum of left-wing ideologies past and present, and that this should be done by taking into account the dilemmas of reformism as a political project and the paradoxes latent in the SAP's identification of the reformist strategy with welfare capitalism. The chapter suggests that the history of the SAP can be thought of in terms of a historic set of three different engagements with the relationship between capitalism and the welfare state, understood as a set of evolving historical compromises over time.

From Marxism to Reformism

The first of these three engagements begins in the early period of labour mobilization, during which a mass party (founded in 1889) grows from a set of different social movements and disparate class alliances rooted in a highly agrarian and proto-industrial Sweden, and is brought together around ideas of discipline, work ethic, and eventually working-class interest. It ends with the construction of the theoretical edifice of functional socialism, highly inspired by, but also different from, Eduard Bernstein's reformism, in particular in its overwhelming emphasis on household consumption and welfare state spending in a mixed economy.⁵ These ideas marked the social democrat

2 H. Hecló and H. Madsen, *Policy and Politics in Sweden: Principled Pragmatism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

3 S. L. Mudge, *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); J. Andersson, *The Library and the Workshop: Social Democracy and Capitalism in the Knowledge Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); J. M. Ryner, *Capitalist Restructuring, Globalization and the Third Way: Lessons from the Swedish Model* (London: Routledge, 2013).

4 Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*.

5 G. Adler-Karlsson, *Funktionssocialism. Ett alternativ till kommunism och kapitalism* (Uppsala: Prisma, Föreningen Verdandi, 1967).

breakthrough in the 1930s through the principled response to the Great Depression by party theorists and Stockholm school economists such as Ernst Wigforss and Gunnar Myrdal.⁶ The theoretical defence of state-led investments into relief works and housing permitted the party to break out of the 1920s ideological stalemate around Marxism and shape a response, distinct in kind, both to Marxist doctrine and to liberal political economy.⁷ In the post-war years, this paved the way for a mature theoretical doctrine around the mixed economy and the welfare state.

As in most other places in Europe, there was no direct link between a strong industrial working class and social democracy in the Scandinavian countries. The link was forged in an active work of construction of class identity from a constellation of fractured positions.⁸ Nordic political history suggests that Sweden at the dawn of labour mobilization in the 1870s was a universally poor country, and that the experience of mass poverty and the resentment of a highly patriarchal society was decisive for labour mobilization. Between 1870 and 1920, one-fifth of the Swedish population emigrated from destitute conditions in the rural countryside and exploitation in saw mills and mines. The early working class was split between a liberal self-reliant group of relatively skilled workers, often in traditional guilds of metallurgy or printing, and a radical socialism among seasonal workers and landless or semi-landless crofters rooted in the countryside.⁹ There were historically no serfs in Sweden, but a large group of day labourers, who by the end of the nineteenth century moved between agrarian and industrial occupation. A fundamental cleavage in agrarian society between the independent farmer class and this rural proletariat helped to radicalize the working class.¹⁰ It was a cleavage that social democracy eventually overcame in its 1930s alliance with the agrarian party around unemployment policies and tariffs – paving the way for the welfare state as a quintessential social compromise.

6 L. Jonung (ed.), *The Stockholm School of Economics Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ö. Appelqvist, 'Bruten brygga. Gunnar Myrdal och Sveriges ekonomiska efterkrigspolitik 1943–1947', PhD dissertation, Stockholm University, 2000.

7 H. Tingsten, *Den svenska socialdemokratins idéutveckling* (Stockholm: Aldus/Bonnier, 1967); L. Lewin, 'Planhushållningsdebatten', PhD dissertation, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala, 1967; T. Lindbom, *Den svenska fackföreningsrörelsens uppkomst och tidigare historia 1872–1900* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1938).

8 G. Salmonsson, 'Den förståndiga viljan: Svenska järn- och metallarbetareförbundet 1888–1902', PhD dissertation, Uppsala, 1998.

9 E. Bengtsson and P. Svensson, 'The living standards of the rural classes in Sweden, 1750–1900: evidence from rural probate inventories', *Lund Papers in Economic History* 13 (2020).

10 E. Bengtsson, *Världens jämlikaste land?* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2020); E. Bengtsson, 'The Swedish *Sonderweg* in question: democratization and inequality in comparative perspective, c. 1750–1920', *Past & Present* 244, 1 (2019), pp. 123–61.

The economic historian Erik Bengtsson points out that Sweden's voting rights until the comparatively late introduction of universal suffrage in 1919 (for men) meant that a remarkably hierarchical system of landlords and wealthy peasants endured long after labour had gained political power in Germany or the United Kingdom. The right to vote was conditional and proportional to property-holding, and the estates correctly anticipated that suffrage would be followed by a parliamentary revolution. It was the acute sense of exclusion from liberal democracy that shaped the SAP's insistence on what Sheri Berman has called the primacy of politics, the extension of democracy, and the subsequent use of the vote to shape reformist politics.¹¹

Bengtsson's work re-emphasizes the welfare state as a radical discontinuity in twentieth-century history, due to the importance of a set of reforms from the interwar period on, which changed the distribution of both economic and political capital in industrial society.¹² In the last four decades, the roll-back of redistributive policies has also resulted in a dramatic return of inequality, and Sweden is a case in point here.¹³ This observation calls not for nostalgia, but for an understanding of the dynamics by which a social democratic welfare state could act as a fundamental stabilization on capitalist society, by organizing a set of alliances and compromises indispensable to the solidity of these reforms. The fundamental compromise that was the welfare state is clearly reflected in the SAP's history, and vice versa. The 'Swedish model' was both profoundly market liberal and a distinct form of social market economy with radical democratic concerns. Social democracy shared with socialism the critique of the capitalist economy and the overarching objective of equality, and with the liberal political economy a certain appreciation of market instrumentalities. From the 1920s on, this translated into a continued appreciation of competition and the price mechanism within the mixed economy.

Liberal and conservative legacies played a role in the creation of a specific Swedish working-class identity. Sweden of the late nineteenth century was a country of forestry and capital-intensive export industries in metallurgy and engineering, but also dominated by an old manor culture where workers lived in directly paternalist arrangements, and of small holdings and seasonal

11 S. Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

12 T. Piketty, *Le capital au XXI^e siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2013); T. Piketty, *Capital et idéologie* (Paris: Seuil, 2019).

13 J. Roine and D. Waldenström, 'Wealth concentration over the path of development: Sweden, 1873–2006', *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 111, 1 (2009), pp. 151–87.

farm work. Early working-class culture included strong notions of self-improvement and mutuality, co-operation, and frugality.¹⁴ An important basis of socialist mobilization could be found in an existing associational world of friendly societies, study circles, and social movements organized around Protestantism and sobriety. Study circles in household economics paved the way, possibly, both for a critique of the financial capitalism of the day and for a pragmatism that informed socialist economists well into the mid-twentieth century. Disciplinarian notions of self-improvement and education held profoundly utopian, emancipatory dreams.¹⁵

Social democracy grew both with and against social liberalism to form a direct confrontation with agrarian society. In 1917, the SAP ejected its left flank, which went on to create the Swedish Communist Party. The ejection was caused by divisions over the collaboration with the liberals which enabled social democrats to form the first Branting Government (Hjalmar Branting was the first elected party leader in 1907 and minister of finance in the liberal Edén Government before becoming prime minister in the first election after universal suffrage in 1920), but also stopped them from developing a distinct political economy, in a time of famine and unrest. The increase in parliamentary power during the 1920s (in 1924 a 41 per cent share of the electorate) spawned a growing awareness of the theoretical dilemmas of parliamentary socialism. The foundations of reformism were laid by authors such as Nils Karleby, Arthus Engberg, and Rickard Sandler, who in the pages of the party organ *Tiden* argued that principled ideological points had to be developed from the confrontation with reality.¹⁶ The SAP, from the mid-1920s on, opted strategically for reformism, and reasoned that power held in office had to be actively used for the betterment of concrete economic and social circumstances in the present.¹⁷ This led the party to essentially abandon what was often labelled 'Marxian fatalism' (*ödestro*) and insist instead on the practical conditions of reform, thus embracing Bernstein's principles of gradual and parliamentary reform to an extent that differed profoundly with other social democratic parties of the time.¹⁸

14 M. Isacson and L. Magnusson, *Vägen till fabrikerna. Industriell tradition och yrkeskunnande i Sverige under 1800-talet* (Stockholm: Gidlund, 1983); R. Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren. Idéer och ideal i ett norrländskt sågverkssamhälle 1880–1930* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1988).

15 B. Gustavsson, 'Bildningens väg. Tre bildningsideal i svensk arbetarrörelse 1880–1930', PhD dissertation, Göteborg University, 1991.

16 N. Karleby, *Socialismen inför verkligheten. Studier över socialdemokratisk åskådning och nutidspolitik* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1926).

17 A. Bergounioux and G. Grunberg, *Le long remords du pouvoir. Le Parti socialiste français (1905–1992)* (Paris: FeniXX, 1992).

18 Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*.

Remaining from the 1920s would, however, be a notion of social democracy as the fundamental actor of the class struggle in industrial society, but within a specific idea of the class struggle that emphasized a plurality of class relations, the legitimacy of capital's interests, and the necessity of an open and not law-bound view of social change, in direct opposition to Marxism.¹⁹ What has often appeared as pragmatics in fact contained a principled response to the problem of how to construct durable alliances around reform, and to the question of the very meaning of social democracy.²⁰ It is thus fair to say that the SAP in the 1920s found a specific interpretation of the political theory of social democracy. This included an insistence on freedom and emancipation as stemming not from a one-time socialization of the means of production, but from constant opposition to larger power structures in society. The doctrine of class society insisted on the role of consciousness and morality in the individual worker subject, but also on the energy in a collective process of social transformation. Against speculation social democrats emphasized work as the fundamental value-creating process in society and as the foundation of political economy. To this came an idea of social rationalization; a critique of forms of economic and social waste in industrial society and the idea that a more rational social order would produce efficiency gains that could allow spiritual emancipation. Social rationalization was an idea that could appeal to both left and right, it was as much industrial critique as it was social philosophy, and its corollary was to draw social democracy firmly into the sphere of production and capitalist management. A decisive escape from Marxism came in the so-called trust debate over developments in financial capitalism. Rudolf Hilferding argued that financial concentration should be allowed to run its course until the magical moment occurred and monopolies could be transferred into collective ownership. The SAP rejected this stance in favour of the more dynamic idea of economic democracy (which became a central ideological notion of the SAP until the infamous wage-earner funds debacle in 1975, when the Trade Union Federation LO argued for a gradual transfer of the profit share to workers and faced a fundamental defeat as Swedish employers mobilized). Economic democracy was an alternative strategy to nationalization. It emphasized worker participation, state-led planning, and structural reform of industry, as well as a number of alternative industrial forms such as co-operative arrangements and public companies. By the late 1920s, the SAP had replaced the emphasis on ownership of the means of production with a fundamental critique of

19 E. Wigforss, *Från klasskamp till samverkan* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1941).

20 T. A. Tilton, *The Political Theory of Swedish Social Democracy: Through the Welfare State to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

competition as inherently wasteful. In this one could see influences from both German 'Kathedersozialisten', the German historical school, and British guild socialism. When ownership was not the main problem, a plurality of forms of economic organization could be discussed. Nils Karleby, the key intellectual of the 1920s, defined socialization as a vague process-oriented objective by which all and everyone would partake in 'all and the good which society owns', thereby also sharing an interest in a growing pie.²¹ In this principle already in the 1920s came a warning to fellow travellers on the left: society would be richer the more that was produced, and the more that was produced, the more that could be shared. It was thus important to be on the side of accumulation, and an active choice of an economic system should be based on a rational evaluation of productive principles. While competition was shunned as bad, the price mechanism was praised because it was taken to be an accurate reflection of consumer demand, and workers were also consumers.²² When Henri de Man's *The Psychology of Socialism* was published in 1927, SAP theorists interpreted its plea to 'surpass Marxism' as a validation of their thinking.²³ From 1928 on, planning became the central notion and was understood as the way of achieving both rationalization and emancipation without touching the price mechanism or the conjuncture. As the big planning debate raged on into the immediate post-1945 era, price mechanisms were generally preserved in most sectors. In sum, the 1920s brought home that it was not social democracy's business to undo capitalism, but, rather, to turn it into a genuinely efficient social system, through a diverse and sometimes indiscriminate set of means aimed at increasing and distributing growth.²⁴

In most ways, then, Marxism had no place in social democracy after the 1920s, and as the SAP confronted the 1930s depression, a number of key ideological postulates had fallen into place. The notion of planning or *planhushållning* became the SAP's solution to the nationalization debates that crippled the British Labour Party. By accepting that power had to be used in the development of a theory of reformism, the party had blown apart a theoretical dilemma thrown up by Marxism. The unemployment crisis of the 1930s was the test for these ideas. The Swedish left, the liberals, and the agrarians were all, for different reasons, against paying out benefits to the unemployed from public funds. Ernst Wigforss,

21 Karleby, *Socialismen inför verkligheten*, cited in Lewin, *Planhushållningsdebatten*, p. 37.

22 Lewin, *Planhushållningsdebatten*.

23 H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* (Jena: Verlag Eugen Diederichs, 1927).

24 Lewin, *Planhushållningsdebatten*; E. Wigforss, *Socialismen – dogm eller arbetshypotes?* (Eskilstuna: Frihet, 1926); G. Möller, *Socialiseringsproblemen* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1926).

finance minister, epitomized the generation of proto-Keynesian Stockholm school economists for whom social evils should be addressed on a structural level and through an architect's or engineer's view of the economy.²⁵ Wigforss was not a trained economist, but read Keynes and found support there for a new active kind of unemployment policy in which the state accepted public responsibility for the conjuncture and focused on keeping spending up by allocating a social wage to the unemployed. Here, then, a dramatically different route was taken in response to the unemployment question than in the ill-fated example of the SPD, and while workers in Germany joined Nazi ranks and their confrères in France the communist party, social democracy in Sweden gained tremendous working-class support over its new general social policy from 1930 on. In 1936, the party reached 46 per cent of the vote.

Keynesian and proto-Keynesian ideas also boosted a specific sense of allegiance between working-class identity and national sentiment. The general social policy that came together in the 1930s proposed that a new social entity, a welfare state, or a 'people's home', could exert a regulatory function in the economy and steer its products towards social good. In the crisis deal with the agrarian party in 1933 and 1934, social democracy pushed a recognition of the structural evil of unemployment not as a class interest, but as a national interest.²⁶ The crisis deal included the recognition of multiplier effects, of the existence of 'animal spirits' in capital markets, and of the idea that public spending on relief works and building programmes could restore consumption and provide an investment in the social fabric. There were three pillars to general social policy: unemployment insurance instead of relief work and aid; housing policy; and family policy benefits. The latter were informed not just by forms of Keynesian ideas, but also by the in many ways conservative population economics of the Myrdals (Gunnar and Alva). These were embraced by the party and its minister of social affairs, Gustaf Möller, because they lent support to larger notions of public investments into families and 'population matter'.²⁷

The Keynesian response to the unemployment question, the successful crisis deal, and an ensuing radical anti-Nazism, not least in local party ranks, provided components which saved Sweden from the German experience

25 E. Wigforss, *Ha vi råd att arbeta? Något om sparsamhet och offentliga arbeten* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1932).

26 N. Unga, 'Socialdemokratin och arbetslöshetsfrågan 1912–34. Framväxten av den "nya" arbetslöshetspolitiken', PhD dissertation, Uppsala, 1977; J. Olofsson, 'Arbetslöshetsfrågan i historisk belysning: en diskussion om arbetslöshet och social politik i Sverige 1830–1920', PhD dissertation, Lund, 1997.

27 B. Rothstein, 'Managing the welfare state: lessons from Gustav Möller', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 8, 3 (1985), pp. 151–70.

despite important similarities in political culture.²⁸ Both historians and contemporary right-wing politicians have emphasized the nationalist content in the metaphor of the people's home.²⁹ In the 1990s, a debate erupted on the oppressive sides of general social policy, as both historians and the media discovered forced sterilizations and eugenics, in some cases continuing until the 1970s.³⁰ These darker sides of the welfare state were part of the ideology of social rationalization, and of a productivism which tied social rights firmly to notions of labour market participation and productive use.³¹ But there were key differences from the Nazi reference to the nation as a 'home' and the people as 'capital'.³² When the new party leader and future prime minister Per Albin Hansson used the notion of the people's home in a radio speech in 1928, he spoke of a radical citizenship ideal, and of a vision of the benevolent and inclusive state: 'the good home knows of no privilege, no kindred or displaced'.³³ Where in other places the relationship between the working class and the nation was cemented by war, here was a peaceful take on how a new ideal of the state could be used to push through reforms for public welfare.³⁴ Liberal and agrarian alliances helped to turn the welfare state into a quintessential social compromise, and therefore also drove home the idea that a social democratic party in government was not foremost an actor of the class struggle. At the same time, social democracy equated the social good with working-class interests in ways that would be fundamentally challenged in the period after 1970. In the 1980s, sociologists like Gösta Esping Anderson and Walter Korpi described this as the power struggle theorem – explaining the welfare state as an institutionalized class compromise by which the working class used the state as an instrument of the 'democratic class struggle'.³⁵ It had

28 S. Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

29 H. Björck, *Folkhemsbyggare* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2008); F. Lagergren, 'På andra sidan välfärdsstaten. En studie i politiska idéers betydelse', PhD dissertation, Göteborg, 1998.

30 A. K. Hatje, *Från treklang till triangeldrama. Barnträdgården som ett kvinnligt samhällsprojekt under 1880–1940-talen* (Lund: Historiska Media, 1999); I. Wennemo, *Arbetarrörelsen och befolkningsfrågan. Knut Wicksells och makarna Myrdals befolkningsteorier* (Stockholm: Sociologiska Institutionen, 1991).

31 J. Andersson, *Between Growth and Security: Swedish Social Democracy from a Strong Society to a Third Way* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

32 L. Trägårdh, 'Crisis and the Politics of National Community', in N. Witoszek and L. Trägårdh (eds.), *Culture and Crisis: The Case of Germany and Sweden* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002), pp. 5–109.

33 See www.svenskatal.se/1928011-per-albin-hansson-folkhemstalet.

34 S. Berger, 'Democracy and social democracy', *European History Quarterly* 32, 1 (2002), pp. 13–37.

35 G. Esping-Andersen, *Politics against Markets: The Social Democratic Road to Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); W. Korpi, *The Democratic Class Struggle* (London: Routledge, 2018).

real effects over time, as social democracy strengthened its electoral position to 50 per cent of the vote in 1968 and near-universal support for the welfare state was achieved. Compared with other political cultures, *the state as home* contained a remarkable faith in the idea that the state could guarantee a universal public good and support individual freedom. Such a conception of the state was impossible for socialists virtually everywhere else, but the conservative state in Sweden had not lent itself to the same kind of persecution that affected social democratic parties in their early history elsewhere (there were incidents, like the violent military break-up of a strike that killed five sawmill workers in Ådalen in 1931, but generally the relationship between social democracy and the bourgeois state had been peaceful). Social democrats, quite clearly, thought that this state was their home, and that it virtually embodied society–state–citizen relations in an organic sense. The growing critique of welfare statism from both left and right in the 1990s left social democracy disoriented.

Social Democrats of the Affluent Society

The second period is the period of the advanced welfare state after 1945. During this time, high levels of social spending were understood by the party as representing a mature form of socialism, and also as having changed for good cultures of capitalism – paradoxically in such a way as to reintroduce certain forms of capitalist speculation and market behaviour in particular in leading industries after the 1970s crisis. After 1945, the real commitment to the welfare state was made and both the strengths and the weaknesses inherent in the principles of reformism became clear.

Through the 1920s debate and the 1930s general social policies breakthrough, the focus on the welfare state as the pinnacle of a strategy of reform had effectively sidelined the debate on ownership. The Swedish Industry Federation had strong apprehensions of a totally planned economy and large-scale nationalizations until the end of the Second World War. After 1945, there was no longer much resistance from the Swedish right to the welfare state project.³⁶ The post-war Swedish economy was protected by its strong export industries in a time of high global demand, and it benefited from emerging unreconstructed after the war. Once the question of nationalization fell away, industry accepted that a peaceful system of negotiated

36 R. Swedberg, 'Socialists at the Gate: The Lobbying of the Swedish Business Federation', PhD dissertation, Stockholm School of Economics, 2020.

industrial relations was a boon for a highly productive export- and tech-intensive economy. A new generation of liberals after 1945 shared social democrat views on the efficiency of a mixed economy with a strong element of social insurance (health insurance, unemployment insurance, and pensions between 1955 and 1959) and public responsibility for goods such as education and health care (both of which were nationalized into unitary systems in the 1960s). The post-1945 boom for Swedish industry created a spectacular demand for skilled labour, and the politics of the so-called Swedish Model, not least in the Rehn Meidner model, so named after two trade union economists, was predominantly anti-inflationary.³⁷

This specific post-war constellation began to change in the late 1960s as inflation set in and the public sector grew to exceed 50 per cent of GDP. Liberals and social democrats saw different futures for the so-called mixed economy, which after 1945 was social democracy's solution to the problem of capitalism. For liberals, the mixed economy provided public goods that increased the productivity of the market sector, while for social democracy, the growth of public goods over time meant a desired withdrawal from and control over the market. It is not clear if social democracy saw a limit to public sector growth before 1979. The mixed economy meant the realization of a social democratic political economy, which never excluded market elements but embedded them in a larger account of the welfarist purposes of economic activity. It included state-owned but market-like companies in telecommunications, electricity, and steel. It also included a set of agricultural tariffs, rent controls, and co-operatives in banking and food distribution.³⁸ The social philosophy of planning meant that ideas of rationalization could be translated to the national scale. The 'downside' to this particular version of industrial democracy was the need to bring about a constant rapprochement between social democracy and the market, and not least an actual proximity between social democrat and business elites, who met, negotiated, and decided on industrial policy together.³⁹ Another historic irony of the post-1945 age was that welfare statism brought into question the very idea of reformism. In a country with world-leading life expectancy and record levels of equality, the project seemed finished. Post-war social democrats thought that they had tamed the industrial economy and fulfilled the goals of the

37 P. Swenson, *Capitalists against Markets: The Making of Labour Markets and Welfare States in the United States and Sweden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

38 L. Magnusson, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia* (Stockholm: Tiden Athena, 1987), pp. 381f.

39 N. Stenlås, *Den inre kretsen. Den svenska ekonomiska elitens inflytande över partipolitik och opinionsbildning 1940–1949* (Stockholm: Arkiv, 1998).

party programme. The at times superior attitude of Swedish social democrats in transnational contexts in the post-war period came from their self-image of having realized how to be social democrats, and in this was implied that others were still struggling with Marx. At times, these positions made Swedish social democrats deeply unpopular in transnational contexts, and at other times it made them appear as icons, as when Anthony Crosland defined Sweden as the future of socialism in 1956, or when Olof Palme defined democratic socialism as an essentially *humanist* undertaking to a beaming French television reporter in 1979 at the highpoint of Rocardism.⁴⁰

For a generation marked by the working-class experience of the early twentieth century, affluence was a boon, but it came with its own theoretical problems. Between 1955 and 1965, social democracy was beset by critics both inside and outside its ranks who argued that social democracy had, by participating in the great mechanism of wealth creation, contributed to its own unmaking. Was there a working class left, in a country of Saab and Volvo cars, luxurious clothes, public housing, and white-collar jobs? Among the generation of social democrats active after 1950 (Tage Erlander, Sven Aspling, Gustaf Möller) the interwar financial architect Ernst Wigforss was something of an exception, since he still argued for the necessity of a constant reformist and utopian energy up until his death in 1973.⁴¹ Wigforss was for a long time little known in the English-speaking world, but remained an active social democrat intellectual all his life, and thought at the end of his life that the mature welfare state had changed the preconditions of reformism so much that it necessitated its own political theory.⁴² Another voice in the wilderness was the trade union economist Rudolf Meidner, who reacted against a growing gap between industrial profits and wages with the wage-earner funds proposal in 1975. The wage-earner funds proposal was part of a party offensive on workers' rights to participation, security, and work conditions (with a significant set of labour laws in 1975–9). It could be argued, as the political scientist Jonas Pontusson has done, that the wage-earner funds reached the 'limits of social democracy' and that reopening the Pandora's box of ownership was the beginning of the downfall of the SAP. The party leadership was sceptical at best towards the funds proposal, and its defeat

40 C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1956); K. Östberg, *I takt med tiden. Olof Palme 1927–1969* (Stockholm: Leopard, 2006).

41 Andersson, *Between Growth and Security*; E. Wigforss, *Efter välfärdsstaten* (Malmö: Framtiden, 1956).

42 W. Higgins and G. Dow, *Politics against Pessimism: Social Democratic Possibilities since Ernst Wigforss* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013).

had far-reaching repercussions both on social democratic ideology and on the political climate in Sweden.⁴³ The wage-earner funds spurred the break-up of the social compromise between labour and capital that lay behind the welfare state for most of the twentieth century, as business left the bargaining table and even took to the streets in protest (in 1981).⁴⁴ At the same time, the failure of the proposal meant that social democracy would not, despite a rampant speculative process of financial globalization in the decades to come, touch the problem of ownership, profits, and wages.⁴⁵

As power shifted to the right in 1976, it was the liberal parties that developed a mostly failed industrial policy offensive in Sweden in response to the oil crises. Social democracy, from the late 1960s on, turned from economic democracy and wage policies to new reform ambitions in social policy. The reform packages of the late 1960s and early 1970s changed the relationship between social democracy and the welfare state, since their target was no longer strictly the working class but a much broader clientele, not least through efforts to construct new cheap housing and implement a new childcare plan. These were distinctly different goods both economically and politically than social insurance and wage policy, they targeted different groups in women and families, and they also opened a new critique of public spending to come. The 1960s saw the first dissidents in social democracy in economists like Assar Lindbeck, who thought that large social welfare programmes distorted the revered price mechanism and that moving beyond strict wage-earner interest put social democracy in a new logic vis-à-vis the welfare state. By the late 1970s, it seemed clear to a growing group of like-minded economists that the Rehn–Meidner model – which combined solidaristic wage policy with efforts at structural transformation for a high-growth economy – had failed and that it was now subventioning idle sectors in ways that were contrary to the historic emphasis on rationalization and productivity.⁴⁶ The 1960s and 1970s also saw a reawakening of left-wing alternatives to social democracy in several areas: worker militancy took a new hold in Sweden's northern mining regions, but also professional groups such as teachers and social workers returned to anti-bureaucratic and anti-statist

43 J. Pontusson, *The Limits of Social Democracy: Investment Politics in Sweden* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

44 G. Olsen, 'Labour mobilization and the strength of capital: the rise and stall of economic democracy in Sweden', *Studies in Political Economy* 34, 1 (1991), pp. 109–46.

45 See T. Notermans, *Money Markets and the State: Social Democratic Economic Policies since 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

46 J. Andersson, 'Neoliberalism against social democracy', *Tocqueville Review* 41, 2 (2020), pp. 87–107.

notions of individual and group autonomy. A non-statist strand of social democracy, which had partly been ejected in 1917 in the party split, and then suffocated by the dominant statism of the welfare state years, resurfaced around issues such as decentralization of decisions in services like schools and hospitals, parent or worker co-operatives in childcare, or even branching out into fully fledged private 'choice'-based alternatives. Some groups of workers, not least women nurses and cleaners fatigued with the public sector employer, thought they would win out on privatization by increasing wages and influence.⁴⁷

In the period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, a new wave of white collar and public sector strikes shook the relationship between social democracy and the welfare state. Social democracy returned to power more stably after a first aggressively neoliberal government in 1994, but the period since has marked the beginning of large-scale structural decline both in trade union membership and in electoral support for social democracy. The reasons for this came both from the outside and from within the party itself.

A Fragmenting Coalition

The post-war boom ended in 1967 or 1968, mainly due to new fluctuations on international commodity markets and the inflationary pressures of the American war economy.⁴⁸ The absence of growth reiterated a set of social conflicts at the heart of the reformist project, not only the fundamental tension between labour and capital that sparked the conflict over the wage-earner funds, but also a break-up in the crucial welfare statist alliance between blue- and white-collar workers, each of which had a central trade union organization (Landsorganisationen, LO, and Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation, TCO). Coming decades saw new social conflicts between industry and public sector employees, as well as between indigenous and migrant labour, and, not least, between women and men. Those decades also saw the eruption of conflicts that had in fact been part of the Fordist order but now came to be clearly visible – the North–South division and the conflict between growth and nature preservation.

Underpinning the Swedish model was a demand for labour that in the 1950s and 1960s could be satisfied by a steady flow of labour migration. Most migrant workers came from Finland, Italy, and Yugoslavia, and were treated

47 Ibid. 48 Ibid.

both at work and in housing arrangements and cultural activities as second-rate citizens. Not least Finnish migrants became deeply associated in the Swedish collective psyche with alcoholism and park benches, while Italian workers fared better and also brought pizza and spaghetti.⁴⁹ Labour migration re-enacted ideological differences, but in ways that did not strengthen links between immigrant workers and social democracy – the Trade Union Federation insisted on regulated quotas (and eventually boycotted migrant labour in 1976), while Swedish industry wanted free labour immigration and also ran its own recruitment offices in the countries concerned.⁵⁰ Wage policies, social insurance, and public sector provision until the mid-1970s predominantly focused on male industrial workers – until the party somewhat inadvertently realized that it had in its ranks a new generation of women who were juggling work and domestic labour. Feminist social democrats focused on principled issues such as separate taxation and sexual legislation, particularly after 1968.⁵¹ But their overwhelming focus was on childcare, leading to a partly new definition of the public sector as a public responsibility for reproductive work.⁵² Notions of rationalizing the household had been a central element in functionalist debates in the 1930s, but the massive investment in public childcare between 1965 and 1975 aimed to make care work collective through a prism of productivity gains. To party economists, women were the largest available labour reserve and deeply needed in the full-employment economy. Renegotiating the gender divide opened the door to a new set of issues that could not be economically motivated in the same way. In the 1970s and 1980s, cultural issues grew in importance, as did global ones. When Palme, the modern Kennedy-like figure who was portrayed in the media with a working wife and two sons, took over the chairmanship from Erlander, party language changed to embrace questions of women's rights, sexuality, problems of alienation, drug and substance abuse, environmental concerns and fears of the future, and decolonization and solidarity with the Third World.⁵³ Palme was important in revitalizing the transnational movement around the Socialist International, the Brandt

49 L. Ekdahl, *Välfärdssamhällets spegel. Kommunal 1960–2010* (Stockholm: Premiss, 2010).

50 W. Knocke, *Invandrade kvinnor i lönearbete och fack. En studie om kvinnor från fyra länder inom Kommunal- och Fabriksarbetareförbundets avtalsområde* (Stockholm: Arbetslivscentrum, 1986); J. Waara, 'Svenska arbetsgivareföreningen och arbetskraftsinvandringen 1945–1972', PhD dissertation, Göteborg University, 2012.

51 E. Elgán, *Att ge sig själv makt. Grupp 8 och 1970-talets feminism* (Göteborg: Makadam, 2015); Y. Hirdman, *Med klaven tunga. LO och genusordningen* (Stockholm: Atlas, 1998).

52 D. Sainsbury (ed.), *Gender and Welfare State Regimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

53 Östberg, *I takt med tiden*.

and Bruntland commissions for international security and environmental sustainability, and social democrats and liberals implemented the 1 per cent target of national budget aid to developing countries in 1974.⁵⁴ It can be proposed that there was in these formative years an embryo of a quite different Third Way from the inherently market-oriented one that subsequently developed, amounting to a renewed social democratic globalism, and that Sweden was a frontrunner here. But much of this ideological offensive crashed in confrontation with the rapidly harsher economic realities after the first oil crisis, and many of these questions also collided with rising arguments about the freedoms of individuals and markets in the decade after. Feminizing the public sector had its own problems. Later scholars have seen in the orientation to the welfare state and public goods of 1960s feminism a specific state-feminist approach. In the 1980s and 1990s, women-dominated unions such as the municipal workers rebelled against the public sector employer of the social democratic welfare state and saw privatization as a possible route of emancipation. In the 1990s and 2000s, the welfare state became the enemy of liberal and conservative feminists, and a new alliance of women thus joined forces in advocating either market or back-to-home solutions, for instance in childcare, from this period on.

Built into the Rehn–Meidner model was also a set of intra-worker conflicts that had been held down by wage increases and inflation, but that now exploded. The first of these was the central conflict between wage-leading unions in metallurgy and the largely female workers in public sector employment. Attempts to make public sector wages follow industrial ones in the 1970s clashed, first, with industrial worker discontent and, secondly, with the doctrines of a new generation of economists for whom public spending was essentially inflationary. In 1981, social democracy promised to return to government with a stabilizing programme that included an end to wage negotiations and a super-devaluation to end inflation.⁵⁵ The Third Way, on which Swedish social democrats were now forerunners (Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder's Third Way pamphlet was only written in the mid-1990s), sparked an acute conflict with the trade unions and an enduring rift with the trade union federation, the LO.

54 M. Di Donato, *I comunisti italiani e la sinistra europea. Il PCI e i rapporti con le social-democrazie (1964–1984)* (Bologna: Carocci Editore, 2015); B. Vivekanandan, *Global Visions of Olof Palme, Bruno Kreisky and Willy Brandt: International Peace and Security, Cooperation, and Development* (Amsterdam: Springer, 2016).

55 SAP, *Framtid för Sverige*, 1981; J. Lindvall, 'The Politics of Purpose: Swedish Macroeconomic Policy after the Golden Age', PhD dissertation, Göteborg University, 2004.

By the 1980s, therefore, social democracy was literally caught up in a world of fragmented and imploded social alliances. Social democratic ontologies of the 1990s became uncertain, hesitant, and stumbling. The Third Way was a new language, distinct from the language of reformism, its economic theory was hardly recognizable as social democratic, and yet it fell back, at least in Sweden, on a deceptively familiar language of security and universality. Third Way reforms such as Kjell Olof Feldt's tax reform in 1991, Persson's austerity package of 1994–8, the decentralization of schools and the acceptance of voucher schools (introduced by the conservative government in 1991), and even the decision to join the European Union had further destabilizing effects over time. Their costs and benefits played out most differently for the different partners of the historical social compromise of the welfare state, causing this to split, perhaps permanently.⁵⁶ While white-collar workers of the so-called TCO collective wanted increased wage mobility in return for meritocracy and educational investment, specific professional groups, notably teachers, defended welfare statist privileges with strikes. The teachers' union, historically a social democrat support bloc, split in two.⁵⁷ The very corner-stone of Third Way politics was a new middle-class political subject, sometimes understood conservatively, and sometimes in radical fashion as a veritable agent of change. But middle-class politics, in Sweden and elsewhere, was a deeply ambiguous project, which demanded an effort of construction just as it called for an often complex and arbitrary interpretation of the social world. It included social groups and alliances that were never the core of the social democratic project, but rather children of the mature welfare state – and whose allegiance after 1968 did not straightforwardly go to social democracy but also to the radical left and, in the 1980 and 1990 elections, to the New Right. While Swedish feminism in the 1980s and 1990s was taken over by a new and vocal liberal-conservative stand, immigrant communities in the same period voted with their feet and many times preferred privatized services that seemed to offer the mobility and choice not on offer in the social democratic welfare state. For instance, the so-called free or voucher schools were strongly supported by voters in immigrant communities with underperforming public schools, and at the same time, they created an enduring source of discrimination as children born to ethnically Swedish parents are very much more likely to be in a private school. There were also other fractures, of huge importance both socio-economically and

56 C. Green-Pedersen, 'The growing importance of issue competition: the changing nature of party competition in western Europe', *Political Studies* 55, 3 (2007), pp. 607–28.

57 J. Ringarp, 'Professionens problematik. Lärarkårens kommunalisering och välfärdsstatens förvandling', PhD dissertation, Lund University, 2011.

symbolically: the deregulation of the credit market in the 1980s, along with the rise of a thoroughly speculative new world economy, created new fortunes and a new group of stockbrokers and dealers joined the 'old' 100 families of industrial wealth. In industry, the historic compromise between social democracy and the old families started to break up. Traditional strands of conservatism and liberalism that had mainly been on board in the welfare state project were reshaped by an aggressive new liberalism, which found its references internationally but grew from domestic frustrations. When Milton Friedman received the Nobel prize in economics in 1976, to huge protests in Stockholm, there was universal negative reporting in the Swedish press, but between 1976 and 1979, Friedman returned several times to Sweden, invited by a radical branch of the business organization that had been biding its time since 1945.⁵⁸

It turned out, much to social democracy's surprise, that there were and in fact had always been groups in Swedish society that did not like the welfare



Fig. 3.1 A man places a red rose on the memorial plaque on the corner between Sveavägen and Tunnelgatan Streets in central Stockholm, where the Swedish prime minister Olof Palme was murdered in February 1986, on 10 June 2020. On that day, Swedish prosecutors said they had closed their investigation into the murder because their main suspect, a Swede opposed to Palme's left-wing policies, was now dead. (Photograph by Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP via Getty Images.)

58 Andersson, 'Neoliberalism against social democracy'.

state, because it defied their sense of hierarchy and their notion of national allegiance. Some of these were in the military, others in economic sectors like banking, advertising, or insurance. Capital interests in Sweden had for a long time lived in two worlds. As is dramatically testified by what we now know of the murder of Olof Palme, shot on 29 February 1986, there were strata in Swedish society who profoundly loathed social democracy, not least for its active Third World stance in the 1970s and 1980s, and who felt a release from constraint in these new times.⁵⁹ Even in the general population, cultural patterns and mores in the 1980s rapidly ran away from social democracy: in the 1950s, there had been the two-room apartment with running water, the Saab or the Volvo. Now there were long-distance holidays to Thailand, wine imports, and credit cards. Independent radio stations and satellite TV became bastions of neoliberal propaganda in the 1980s and 1990s – far from the old two-channel monopoly which was mainly controlled by the social democrats.

Final Remarks

The ‘war of the roses’ in the early 1980s introduced a rift between party and trade unions that has never healed. Trade union representatives were shocked by 1990s attempts to legislate against the right to strike, by changes in health and unemployment insurance, and by the cap on public expenditure in place since 1998, which has only recently been shaken by the Covid crisis. Trade unions were, of course, a privileged interlocutor of party officials, but so were members, key professions, and intellectuals. In the 1990s and 2000s, the SAP (in the 1990s simply ‘S’) turned from its support system in these different groups and essentially followed the trajectory of New Labour, reducing the influence of members and cementing the decision-making power of the party elite. Swedish social democrats joined Blair and Schröder, and not Jospin or Lula, in the global Third Way debate from the 1990s on, and so contributed to postponing a global discussion on international capital, the dangers of the financialized economy, and rising inequality. The 2008 financial crisis made clear that the Swedish economy was

59 In April 2020, the Swedish main prosecutor announced his conclusion that Olof Palme was most likely murdered by a clerk in the private insurance house Skandia, liberal competitor to the labour movement-controlled insurance company Folksam, who had, possibly, links to groups in the military appalled at Palme’s support for North Vietnam and the ANC. In particular, Sweden’s stance on South Africa was a highly divisive factor – both the Swedish mining industry and machine wagon exporters had strong links with the South African government.

among the most financialized of the world – with household debt among the highest of the OECD nations, fuelled by privatization of the housing supply – and the Covid crisis has similarly shown that the under-investment in public sector provisions since the early 1990s has created a care system that is, in parts, extremely fragile. At the 2018 election, social democracy could not reach a majority and strategically refused to govern with the left party, leaving it to the mercy of a very fragile alliance with the liberals and centrists. This ‘January deal’ led in turn to the creation of a splinter group along the lines of Podemos or Momentum, Reformisterna. As the ‘January deal’ eroded in the run-up to the 2022 election, the new leader Magdalena Andersson has announced a new economic programme built on investment in green growth through marginal borrowing on the financial markets but, so far, a hesitant social agenda.

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The British Labour Party

JOHN CALLAGHAN

Context

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland comprised four nations and around 41.5 million people in 1900, of whom 72 per cent lived in England. In Britain, an established two-party system operated and after the extensions of the vote in 1867 and 1884 enfranchised men (about 60 per cent of men of voting age) could choose between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Most of the craft trade unions looked to the Liberal Party for social improvements, and elements of liberalism had reached deep into the organized working class. But a working-class Conservative vote was also established. The parliamentary system enjoyed a wide popular legitimacy, as did the constitutional monarchy and an empire which even the left could justify (in terms of trusteeship). Prosperity was thought to depend on free trade, even though Britain was the only major industrial country that took this view. At home Parliament enacted meaningful reforms often enough to give reformers belief and encouragement. From the 1880s, pressure from the left for reforms came from the small socialist groups, the New Liberalism (which emphasized the need for state interventions to address the failures of *laissez faire* liberalism), the campaign for the women's vote, the new trade unionism organizing unskilled workers, and the demand for Home Rule in Ireland, closely aligned with the Liberal Party under Gladstone's leadership. The most potent demands for reform were those that concerned rights consistent with a liberal worldview. Until the First World War, the expectation was that even Irish demands for self-government could be managed from Westminster. Yet, in addition to the pressures on the Liberal Party from within the left, it also had to contend with a Conservative Party drawing upon deference and outbidding it in its protestations of patriotism, defence of Empire, resistance to socialism, support for the armed forces, maintenance of law and order, and defence of property.

Britain was the most industrialized, the most urbanized, and the most proletarian country in the world in 1900, relatively free of sectarian, ethnic, linguistic, and nationalist divisions. Major industrial conurbations, containing dozens of ugly industrial towns, existed in south Wales, Northern Ireland, and central Scotland, as well as in England. Twenty-three cities had populations above 100,000, while that of London – capital of finance and Empire as well as the United Kingdom – was already bigger than that of the whole of Ireland. The first generation of Labour leaders was working class and largely drawn from these cities and towns. It was mostly composed of men – such as Keir Hardie and Arthur Henderson, but also women such as Margaret Bondfield – who led the fight for trade union rights. Many of them had initially supported the Liberal Party, some had joined it and even aspired to represent labour interests within it at parliamentary level. They were conscious of currents in British politics critical of Victorian industrialism but persuaded of the need to help themselves.

Origins

Discontents multiplied in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Great Depression (1873–96) worried contemporaries, as did severe bouts of unemployment and the challenge of German and American competition behind walls of tariff protection. Imperialist rivalries and the exposure of chronic levels of poverty in Britain affecting over a third of the working class were seen as related problems – highlighted by the protracted South African War (1899–1902) – and requiring an urgent new statist approach to the question of ‘national efficiency’. The Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the socialist gradualists of the Fabian Society, both predominantly London-based, drew attention to themselves from 1884 by addressing problems of poverty and unemployment in the capital. Further signs of political change were perceived in the spectacular eruption of trade union organization among unskilled workers. The established craft unions were themselves stirred by these events and in the 1890s became dissatisfied with their representation in Parliament. Militant employers (many of them prominent liberals), the uncertain legal status of collective bargaining, and the neglect of social and economic issues by successive governments were among the causes. The largest of the socialist groups, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), formed in 1893, and attracting working-class support in parts of the north of England and Scotland rather than London, knew that it could not mount an effective parliamentary challenge on its own. Although the ILP was

able to win seats on borough councils, Hardie in particular understood that the requisite financial and organizational muscle for a national challenge could be had only by some sort of working alliance with the trade unions, which had just over 2 million members by 1900, about 15 per cent of the workforce.¹ The conference of trade unionists and socialists which met in London on 26–27 February 1900 to consider independent labour representation in Parliament, on the authority of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), took that vision a step closer to realization when it formed a Labour Representation Committee (LRC). By 1906, this body had become the Labour Party.

Infancy

Explanations for the growth of Labour and the decline of the Liberal Party remain hotly contested among academics,² but certain facts are undisputed. Socialism was initially a minority viewpoint in the Labour Party and its most successful idiom was that of the ethical socialism of the ILP, many of whose founder members regarded socialism as the practical application of New Testament Christianity. The combined strength of the socialist groups in Britain was no more than 65,000 on the eve of the First World War, perhaps 50,000 by the end of it. By 1903, most of the trade unionists affiliated to the TUC, overwhelmingly men drawn from heavy industry, were also affiliated to the LRC. Trade union membership also grew, particularly after 1910 in the context of an unprecedented strike wave and then in the full-employment environment created by the First World War. By 1920, membership had reached a peak of 8.25 million (roughly 46 per cent of the workforce), of which about 4.3 million were affiliated to Labour, greatly improving its finances and its ability to contest elections.³ The federal structure of the Labour Party allowed the ILP and the Fabian Society to maintain their own organizations as affiliates. But the SDF disaffiliated from the LRC and, like all the organizations that promoted stronger versions of socialist ideology to the left of the Labour Party – such as the British Socialist Party (1911), the Communist Party (1920), and the later secessionist ILP (1932) – it did not

1 H. A. Clegg, A. Fox, and A. F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889*, vol. 1, 1889–1910 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 466.

2 See D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900–1918* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–16.

3 H. A. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889*, vol. 11, 1911–1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 568, 570.

prosper. Individual socialists could occupy leadership positions within the Labour Party, as the examples of Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, and others show, but the largely non-socialist trade unions dominated the organization numerically and financially. The socialism best adapted to these circumstances consisted of those variants of the ideology permeable with the left-wing of liberalism – conforming to the requirements of parliamentary politics, emphasizing the functionality of collectivist measures (as the Fabians did) and the want of social justice in laissez faire capitalism. The party adopted no programme until 1918, but it was understood from the earliest days that an effective Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) had to be allowed a certain autonomy and could not be dictated to by the unions.⁴ Members of Parliament had to represent all their constituents and appeal to broad publics. A Labour government would have to serve the nation. In fact, socialist frustration with the pre-1914 Labour Party had much to do with its lacklustre parliamentary performance. The party increased its representation in Parliament to 42 MPs in December 1910 largely as a consequence of a secret agreement with the Liberal Party negotiated in 1903, allowing each party to contest a limited number of seats unchallenged. Labour's small parliamentary group – mostly former trade union officials – seemed but the tail of a great reforming party, while outside Parliament fierce industrial conflicts, the dramatic suffragette campaign, and the prospect of armed conflict in Ireland suggested opportunities for a more radical approach. Though the socialist groups to the left of Labour were unable to exploit these extra-parliamentary upheavals, Labour itself did make progress as an independent force in the localities, evidence perhaps that local activists were unimpressed by the New Liberal-inspired reforms emanating from Westminster and not inclined to maintain the 'progressive alliance' in their own districts with middle-class Liberals they no longer trusted.

War and Revolution

Labour took a patriotic stance throughout the First World War. It voted for war credits, entered coalition governments formed in 1915 and 1916, assisted recruitment and industrial peace, and served on numerous war-related committees. Hitherto Labour had followed the Liberal lead on most foreign policy issues and occasionally voiced criticisms of secret diplomacy and alliances.

4 L. Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 26–48.

Membership of the Second International from 1908 gave Labour's socialists the opportunity to affirm their opposition to war, as at Copenhagen in 1910. But when war came in August 1914, Labour followed public opinion in supporting the fight against 'Prussian militarism' and the defence of Belgian neutrality. Even those who favoured British neutrality, such as the party chairman MacDonald, publicly supported the war effort. Those who opposed it, mostly on pacifist grounds, like the ILP, lost members in consequence.⁵

Labour survived the war without suffering damaging splits. Arthur Henderson led the party after MacDonald's resignation, and it was Henderson's conviction from the beginning that labour's wartime sacrifices would demand compensation, including a say in the peace settlement. The Liberal Party leadership divided under the strain of conducting the war, with Lloyd George replacing Herbert Asquith as prime minister in December 1916 and forming a coalition government heavily dependent on the Conservatives. But it took the revolutions in the tsarist empire and the rhetoric of President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 to persuade Labour that the time was right for a statement of war aims. Henderson and Sidney Webb, the leading Fabian, also composed a new constitution for the party in 1918, mindful of an imminent extension of the franchise which increased the size of the electorate to 21.4 million (from the 7.7 million eligible in 1912), with women – still discriminated against by age – now constituting about 40 per cent of the total.

The new constitution reinforced the dominance of the unions within the organization while permitting individuals to join the party directly, a measure requiring constituency Labour parties throughout Britain. Though socialism was not mentioned in the text, clause IV of the new constitution suggested that the party's aim was now 'the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'; no clarification was ever forthcoming and the party remained averse to doctrinal statements. Webb proclaimed that the old working-class male-dominated party – a 'sectional and somewhat narrow group' – was being replaced by a national party. Voting and representation within the party would be in 'exact proportion to membership', but the doubling of the electorate and especially the creation of 6 million women voters (five-sixths of them married) opened the prospect of hundreds of thousands of new members, not only of the working class but, in Webb's words, also 'the shop-keeping, manufacturing and professional classes'. The female membership – about

5 J. Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 24–60.

250,000 in 1918, affiliated mostly through their unions, but also comprising about one-fifth of the ILP membership – was expected to grow now that women had the vote. Labour had supported the women's vote by calling for universal suffrage, but it was never a campaigning priority. The new constitution ensured women would enjoy guaranteed places on the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the party, though the entire annual conference (that is, the male-dominated unions) would decide who these four women would be. At constituency level, women would be able to choose to belong to a women's section or a mixed party branch or both.⁶ By 1922, 100,000 women had joined the women's sections, but only nine of them became MPs between the wars, few were elected as delegates to annual conference, and their representation on the NEC proved tokenistic. While middle-class and even aristocratic men joined the ranks of Labour MPs in the interwar years, the most successful woman in the PLP, Margaret Bondfield, had amassed thirty years' experience of trade union leadership by the time she became the first female Cabinet member in 1929, in a career of single-minded devotion to established party priorities. But even she was denied a safe seat and by 1932 women were largely absent from the party at national level. It was in local government that some hundreds of them held elected office, implementing discretionary social policies, agitating for more, and promoting the party as the one that cared about education, health, decent housing, the alleviation of poverty, and a host of related issues relatively neglected by the national leadership.⁷ But even in this arena men dominated the candidate selection process.

Empire

The socialist press largely opposed imperialism, from the late 1890s, as the policy of ruthless finance capitalists intent on violent expansion of empire in the interests of the exploitation of people and natural resources. But even during the South African War some socialists, like the Fabian George Bernard Shaw, saw empires as permanent facts of life and argued that the goal should be to transform the British Empire into a humane progressive partnership between its constituent racial groups as a step towards the socialist goal of

6 S. Webb, 'The New Constitution of the Labour Party: A Party of Handworkers and Brainworkers', n.d. but 1918, <http://webbs.library.lse.ac.uk/124/1/NewConstitutionOfTheLabourParty1918.pdf>.

7 P. M. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918–1919* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp. 1, 115, 153, 176.

world government. Anti-imperialist positions persisted within the party in the succeeding decades, but the PLP and TUC soon came to accept the benign vision of empire as a multi-racial partnership – in aspiration if not in fact, though the two were often conflated.

After the South African War, Labour developed the notion of imperial trusteeship, demanding that the British state intervene in colonial affairs, when and where necessary, to protect human rights and safeguard the interests of indigenous peoples, especially against economic exploitation. Trusteeship remained the dominant Labour conception of the Empire–Commonwealth until Britain's abrupt withdrawal from colonialism. But the Labour governments of 1929 and 1945–51 fell very far short of the ideal, and actually strengthened the grip of the white minority in the racist settler colonies of Africa. The policy was in any case riddled with contradictions. Empire was supposed to rest on native paramountcy, indirect rule, humanitarianism, and socio-economic and political development, in Labour's view, but it was never possible to maintain partnerships with traditional local rulers, where such arrangements existed, and defend a traditional way of life while pursuing economic and political development. Meanwhile, evidence of actually existing repression, racism, and exploitation had to be treated as exceptional and deviant if the trusteeship rhetoric was to remain useful as a legitimizing statement of Britain's imperial purpose. Organized discontent against British rule, as in India and Egypt, could be understood as the work of deracinated intellectuals, unrepresentative of majority opinion. The TUC, acting on such assumptions, set up a Colonial Advisory Committee in December 1937 in response to the National Government's concern about the wave of sustained discontent in the Caribbean colonies. The objective was to advise on how to eliminate nationalist politics within emerging labour unions. TUC collaboration with the Colonial Office for these purposes was regularized in 1938 and the field was extended to include African colonies in the 1940s. The policy was pursued well into the 1950s, by then with additional Cold War justifications.

Conservative Party Hegemony

Writing in 1942, one observer claimed that 'from the early nineteen-twenties onwards ... The situation in Great Britain more nearly resembled that foreseen by Marx than in any of the countries where Marxism had once been influential.'⁸ This superficial view, shared by many socialist activists,

8 E. H. Carr, *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 23–4.

imagined the Labour and Conservative Parties, respectively, embodying the forces of labour and capital in their struggle for economic power. Common values and aspirations certainly informed the idea of a 'labour movement', uniting the parliamentary and trade union wings of the party and connecting them both to the working class. But the stark reality was that trade unions organized under 30 per cent of the workforce for most of the interwar years (membership falling after 1920), while those affiliated to Labour were often around half that figure. Labour's share of the vote increased in each general election between 1918 and 1935 except that of 1931 and reached an interwar peak of 37.9 per cent in 1935. But the Conservative Party, 'increasingly urbanised, commercialised and industrialised', in the same period never obtained less than Labour's best return and was able to attract at least half of the working-class vote in 1931 and 1935. The urban middle class was largely united against Labour and constituted a significant voting bloc in around 200 constituencies.⁹ Many rural constituencies were also solidly Conservative, and it was the Conservatives that took most of the women's vote. This had far-reaching consequences and proved an enduring liability. If women had voted Labour in the same proportion as men, according to one estimate, the party would have governed continuously between 1945 and 1979.¹⁰ But it was not until 1989 that the party adopted quotas for female representation at all levels within the organization, in response to evidence that women perceived Labour as the most masculine of all the parties. Though Labour's parliamentary leadership in the interwar years certainly aspired to represent the working-class majority of citizens, not to function as a mere trade union faction, as the Conservatives were wont to depict it, their rivals proved more persuasive as representatives of 'the public' and the national interest, to judge by interwar voting behaviour.

While the interwar left was divided into three significant electoral forces the Conservatives faced no rivals on the right of the political spectrum. Britain's simple plurality voting system amplified these advantages in terms of parliamentary representation. The Conservative Party was in government for all but three years between 1916 and 1945. Ramsay MacDonald led the PLP between 1922 and 1931, intent on fashioning a moderate, disciplined, responsible Labour group and an image to match it. His purpose was to displace the Liberals, not to work with them. He distanced the party from socialism – a word his opponents were more likely to use – as well as strikes and any

9 J. Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin* (London: Longman, 1978), pp. 112, 122–3.

10 C. Short, 'Women and the Labour Party', *Parliamentary Affairs* 49, 1 (1996), pp. 17–25.

extra-parliamentary forms of politics. He refused to engage with the ILP's attempts to fashion workable socialist policies, dismissing them as 'flashy futilities'. Any association with the small Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was anathema, and increasingly stringent party rules were adopted to isolate it in the mid-1920s. MacDonald also played a leading role in creating the Labour and Socialist International in the years 1919–23 as a consultative, anti-Bolshevik formation of autonomous national parties.

MacDonald's strategy seemed successful in enabling Labour to advance as an electoral force at both national and local levels. The party was able to form minority governments in 1924 and 1929–31. He could not control events, of course, and both Labour governments soon crashed to defeat – the first with the aid of anti-Communist scaremongering, the second in the context of the world economic crisis. Chronic unemployment plagued the old industrial regions of Britain throughout the interwar period. The plunging economic slump of 1921 and the government's determination to restore the Gold Standard and the pre-war valuation of sterling against the dollar contributed to industrial conflict by turning deflation and wage cuts into entrenched policy – leading to the General Strike of May 1926. Sympathy for Soviet Russia persisted within Labour's ranks, but attempts by communists to build rank-and-file movements and revolutionary aspirations within the trade unions were definitively quashed when the General Strike was abruptly called off after nine days. Thereafter, the TUC was steered away from confrontation – in a context of falling trade union membership – in the hope of productive collaboration with governments and employers, a goal not properly reached until the Second World War.

MacDonald's second government was remembered in the post-1945 Labour Party both for the debilitating economic orthodoxy with which it failed to affect mounting unemployment and for his extraordinary decision to join the party's political rivals in forming a National Government in August 1931. His 'treason' led to his expulsion from Labour and a reassertion of trade union influence within the party. When a general election was called two months later in October 1931, however, Labour fought the campaign employing an unprecedented 'socialism now' rhetoric. It suffered its greatest defeat. The parties supporting the National Government took 554 seats out of the 615 contested, confining Labour to ineffective opposition. But this was not a period of pessimism for its activists. Socialism was now the goal of the party and the belief remained strong that a future majority Labour government would enact it. Socialists had been making an impact in the trade unions since 1914 and increasing their presence in local government, as in the London

County Council, which Labour controlled from 1934 to 1967. Economic planning was emerging as a panacea, and the Soviet Union was thought to be building a socialist country on its foundations. Fascism seemed to be a response to capitalist crisis and socialism its only antidote. Even the pacifism that gripped most of the party in the 1930s receded during the Spanish Civil War, widely interpreted as evidence of the binary choice between barbarism and socialism then facing the world. What socialism meant was of course disputed, but the left of the party became wedded to the idea that it entailed state ownership of at least the 'commanding heights' of the economy as the essential pre-requisite for centralized planning. This conviction remained tenacious until the 1980s.

War and Government

The Second World War enabled Labour to enter government, as part of the Churchill coalition, and gave its leaders high-profile positions on the home front. It stimulated the basic industries, eliminated unemployment, and boosted the unions. It brought most of the economy under physical controls exercised by the state and set loose numerous currents that may have helped Labour to win an unprecedented parliamentary majority in July 1945.¹¹ The years of Clement Attlee's Labour premiership, 1945–51, proved to be the party's high tide. To an unusual extent, before or since, the government implemented its programme – nationalizing about one-fifth of the economy, introducing a National Health Service and a 'cradle to grave' array of social services, embarking on a house-building programme, and legislating for progressive change in the development of new towns, national parks, and town and country planning – a 'defence against the vulgarities and atrocities of the past' in the words of one supporter.¹² Yet it did so in the context of shortages of every kind, economic dislocations caused by the war, grave financial instability, and the expansion of Britain's peacetime overseas military commitments. Walls of imperial tariff protection instituted by the National Government in 1932 were maintained. Attlee also secretly began the development of a British atomic bomb.

Though India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma achieved independence from Britain, India having become ungovernable, the Labour government firmly believed that Britain's world role was essential and founded upon the Empire–Commonwealth, which it was determined to preserve and to exploit

11 P. Addison, *The Road to 1945* (London: Cape, 1975).

12 C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London: Constable, 2006 [1956]), p. 406.

economically. During the war, the development of colonial resources acquired urgency, and retained it during Labour's reconstruction efforts when a more systematic exploitation of imperial resources occurred than at any previous time in imperial history. French and Dutch colonial rule in South-East Asia was restored with the Labour government's co-operation.

Domestic reform and continuity in foreign policy proceeded together. Britain was not simply following the American lead in the Cold War after June 1947, but also initiating confrontation with the Soviet Union before Washington showed much interest in the matter.¹³ Labour also played a leading role co-ordinating west European social democracy for Cold War purposes. But it left office having achieved most of what the party had stood for in domestic reforms since the adoption of *Labour's Immediate Programme* (1937). Educational and constitutional reform were among its blind spots. But even in defeat Labour recorded its highest ever percentage of the vote (48.8 per cent) in 1951 and until the mid-1970s 'third' parties could not trouble the two-party dominance it shared with the Conservative Party. Throughout these years about one-third of the working-class vote was delivered to the Conservatives, two-thirds to Labour.

Revisionism

Labour's reforms were seen as only the first step towards socialism by the left of the party, but rival interpretations gained ascendancy in the PLP during the 1950s, buttressed by sustained economic growth, full employment, and the perceived emergence of a two-party consensus embracing Keynesian macro-economic management, the mixed economy, and the 'welfare state'.¹⁴ Labour MPs were also influenced by three consecutive defeats in general elections during the decade, which culminated in anxieties that an affluent society was changing class and occupational structures, as well as values, in ways demanding modernization of the party's image and programme. Though the language of planning and proposals for more public ownership survived in all factions, the party leadership around Hugh Gaitskell (from 1955) emphasized a strategy of equality, avoiding illiberal and allegedly unpopular measures redolent of the Soviet command economy.¹⁵ This had

13 J. Saville, *The Politics of Continuity* (London: Verso, 1993).

14 See R. Lowe, 'The Second World War, consensus, and the foundation of the welfare state', *Twentieth Century British History* 1, 2 (1990), pp. 152–82.

15 Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*; H. Gaitskell, *Socialism and Nationalisation* (London: Fabian Tract 300, July 1956), pp. 3–5.



Fig. 4.1 A series of election posters produced by the British Labour Party, 1950. (Photograph by Topical Press Agency/Getty Images.)

obvious Cold War benefits and was counterposed to the left's continuing attachment to additional waves of public ownership in the service of centralized planning. The bitterness of this dispute for the 'soul of the party' owed something to personal rivalries, notably between Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevan, but also to the course of the Cold War as the leadership endorsed German rearmament, US direction of NATO, and the nuclear arms race. Both sides exaggerated Britain's global power, but economic realities could not be ignored indefinitely. The PLP invested heavily in the idea of British partnership with the United States in world policing – with the Empire–Commonwealth and ambitious defence spending forming the backbone of the British contribution. The Gaitskellite 'revisionists' held on to these tropes as long as they could. Voices on the left demanded faster decolonization, but the party entered the 1950s upholding the conventional wisdom of trusteeship/development, now further distorted by Cold War considerations. Labour talked about its commitment to 'the plural society' in the colonies, meaning the creation of tolerant, multi-racial democracies; British authority would prevail until the basis of political democracy was satisfactorily established. But evidence of growing organized discontent within overseas possessions and levels of repression that mocked Britain's liberal self-image and professed goals helped to change the political arithmetic by 1960, and Britain, like France, accelerated decolonization under a conservative leadership. Labour governments in the 1960s were able to begin the withdrawal of British armed forces from 'East of Suez' and prepare renewed bids to join the Common Market whilst maintaining the continuity of policy.

The parliamentary leadership's control of the party was secured throughout the 1950s by the support of affiliated trade unions. A 'social democratic centralism' held sway, despite the evident enthusiasm for Bevanism among party activists (whose numbers peaked in 1953 at just over 1 million).¹⁶ The unions increased their strength and wage-bargaining efficacy in conditions of full employment. They had strongly supported the Labour governments of 1945–51 and rallied to an anti-communist position when the Cold War began. Communists and Bevanites could be conflated and seen as wreckers of unity, subversive of rules and collective leadership – alien to the party's ethos. But the constant quarrelling between left and right was only part of the problem for Gaitskell and his closest supporters. They attributed defeat in the general

16 E. Shaw, *Discipline and Discord: Politics of Managerial Control in the Labour Party, 1951–1986* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

election of 1959 to the party's association with a declining working class as well as obsolete ideas equating socialism and Labour with state ownership of industry; similar concerns would return in the 1980s.¹⁷ Labour was doomed to fail electorally unless it could free itself from these connections. As Gaitskell told the party's annual conference, 'capitalism has changed largely as a result of our own efforts'. Living standards continued to rise, individuals were meeting their aspirations through consumption and the changing nature of work.¹⁸ In fact, the experience of affluence was yet to come for many Labour voters, and Gaitskell over-reached himself when he pushed for the deletion of clause IV. Most of Labour's strongholds in 1959 were still dependent on the old male-dominated staple industries of coal, steel, textiles, shipbuilding, dock work, and engineering, and the cities and towns in which they were based were still disfigured by slum housing. The state education system merely mirrored the class structure, with 80 per cent of pupils 'failing' to enter the best schools at the age of eleven, while universities catered for less than 5 per cent of school leavers. If newer industries, predominantly in the south and Midlands of England, pointed to a different future, the parliamentary revisionists overestimated the speed of its approach.

Bevan answered Gaitskell's initiative by reminding delegates to the 1959 annual conference that the 'affluent society' was often ugly, vulgar, and meretricious. He could only imply, however, that socialist Labour represented a better vision of modernity. But the old working class and its unions certainly persisted. So did the sense of a broad 'labour movement' informed and united by shared purposes. When Gaitskell failed to persuade the party to replace clause IV with a new statement of aims and values, he failed because the unions defended it as a symbol of their movement's history and identity. Everybody knew that it had never functioned as a policy guide. Observers lamented that there was no ideological clarification akin to the Bad Godesberg programme adopted by the German left. When Tony Blair succeeded where Gaitskell had failed, in 1995, all versions of socialism had been in retreat for some time, not least because of the failures and eventual collapse of the Soviet bloc. In 1959, by contrast, Bevan could defend clause IV by invoking the challenge from Soviet 'Russia', which was widely assumed to be rapidly catching up with the West precisely because of centralized, rational, planning.¹⁹

17 P. Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell* (London: Cape, 1979), pp. 537–40.

18 *Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1959* (London: Labour Party, 1959), p. 107.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 151–5.

Planning for Growth

The problem of combining consumerist individualism and social solidarity was never subject to sustained enquiry by Labour, much less fashioned into a compelling ideology, and many important cultural questions escaped the party's attention, including questions of gender and race. Critics of 'the Establishment' and its grip on British society in the late 1950s found little comfort in the politics of the Labour Party even after circumstances changed both key personnel and the political mood. Bevan and Gaitskell died within three years of one another. The PLP elected Harold Wilson to the leadership of the party in February 1963. By this time any sense of optimistic prosperity had been displaced by awareness of failing national economic competitiveness. Spokesmen for Labour raised the prospect of 'civilizing' Britain – by enlarging personal freedom, developing the arts, improving the built environment, and fostering an enlightened public opinion – but such sentiments were normally eclipsed by preoccupation with basic problems such as 'very harsh poverty', 'economic stagnation', 'sluggish technological change', and the 'real danger' that the United Kingdom could become 'a stagnant economic backwater'.²⁰ Wilson insisted that Conservative dominance in 1951–64 represented 'thirteen wasted years'. The faster growth rates of the Common Market countries showed what could be done; balance of payments crises and stop-go economic policies highlighted British deficiencies. Both were dramatized when the Conservative government's application to join the Common Market was rejected in 1961, though Labour was deeply divided on the issue of membership and Wilson was still promoting the Commonwealth as an alternative in 1964. Divisions over 'Europe' prevented Labour from ever becoming its reliable champion in Britain. Wilson's genius, short-lived when put to the test of government, was to unite revisionists and the party's left wing behind a rhetoric which excoriated the amateurism of British managerial practices, promising faster rates of economic growth based on a National Plan. Labour promised to mobilize science in the service of social ends. In a world of computers and automation – a world in which Soviet plans and American free enterprise mass produced scientists, engineers, and new technologies – Labour governments would harness science to socialism and expand education to meet the challenge. Though Wilson talked of 'socialist planning', the British problem was as often depicted as one of privilege, incompetence, and caste blocking merit and talent. The solution involved educational expansion and tax incentives to stimulate both investment and R&D, rather than

20 R. Jenkins, *The Labour Case* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), pp. 9–19, 135.

an assault on Establishment institutions.²¹ When Labour entered office in October 1964, polling less than 1 per cent more than the Conservatives, it was clear that its main aspirations depended on more rapid economic growth sustained over at least the lifetime of the government. In the event, its principal achievements were in the field of social reform as the government facilitated the passage of laws abolishing capital punishment, legalizing abortion and homosexuality, ending school selection, addressing race discrimination, liberalizing divorce, and promoting equal pay.

But six years of Labour government ended in 1970 with 'little sign of a coherent, overall egalitarian strategy' and an economy in 'a state of semi-permanent crisis'.²² Contemporaries ascribed Wilson's economic failure to his determination to maintain sterling as a reserve currency and to avoid devaluation when the full extent of Britain's balance of payments deficit was revealed upon taking office. Instead, he opted to dampen domestic demand, thus undermining his optimistic economic growth targets. Wilson himself retrospectively complained of international financial speculation blowing the government off course. These were the final years of the Bretton Woods system and perhaps the beginning of what would be called globalization. But the financial speculators were embedded in the City of London, not just overseas as Wilson implied.

Disorientation

Between 1970 and 1997 Labour was in government for just five years, clinging to power in the years 1974–9 with barely a working majority, and for much of the time in the midst of an economic crisis not of its making. Rates of unemployment and inflation had both deteriorated to the point where Keynesianism was formally abandoned in 1976. The Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher's leadership enthusiastically identified the Keynesian welfare state and trade union power as the connected sources of Britain's economic problems. By contrast, Labour had no clear message in the 1970s. The leadership sought to manage the economic crisis by means of unity with a divided trade union movement while much of the mass party was intent on bringing MPs under its control and promoting an Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) of expanded state intervention, public ownership, and increased public spending. In May 1979, the Conservative Party began

21 H. Wilson, *The Relevance of British Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), pp. 22–4, 35–7.

22 C. A. R. Crosland, *Socialism Now* (London: Cape, 1974), pp. 18, 21, 25–6.

a period of eighteen years in government during which the world of Croslandite revisionism was turned upside down.

Three significant overlapping economic phases can be identified in the period between 1970 and 2020. The first, 1970–92, was dominated by inflation and mass unemployment. The worst phase of combined unemployment and inflation occurred during the Thatcher governments even though they gave priority to anti-inflationary measures, destroying much of British manufacturing in the process. They also championed policies to legally weaken trade unions, privatize much of the public sector – including public housing – diminish progressive taxation, and promote a free market ideology. Living standards rose for those in work, especially in the south-east, and so did inequalities of income and region. By 1993, about 20 per cent of families were living on means-tested benefits, up from around 4 per cent in 1948. Financial services became the major power-house of the economy, while old manufacturing towns in the North and Midlands continued to stagnate. Beginning in 1992, at first imperceptibly, the UK economy entered a second phase, one of sustained economic growth and lower rates of inflation which lasted until 2008, when a third phase was begun by the international financial crisis, which led in turn to a prolonged period of austerity operative until the coronavirus pandemic of 2020. Labour Party programmatic change displayed a pronounced shift to the left in the years 1970–81 and a prolonged retreat from these policies in the years 1981–97 – influenced by the electoral success of Thatcherism – and culminating in the Labour governments led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, 1997–2010. General election defeats in 2010 and 2015 stimulated movement to the left in the party and the adoption of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2016. Such volatility was mirrored in, and often connected to, repeated changes in party organization, the size and composition of individual party membership, and relations between the parliamentary leadership and the affiliated trade unions. The most dramatic of these convulsions was the surge in Labour membership that began during the leadership election of June 2015 in support of the candidature of Corbyn, a veteran socialist backbencher. Membership rose from 198,000 to 552,000 by January 2019, both to defeat the Blairite candidates and to exploit their defeat.

But both major political parties were faced with increasingly volatile voting behaviour, the revival of the Liberal Party, and the emergence of nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales since the 1970s. Some of the instability within the Labour Party began even earlier, when wage militancy increased in the context of rising rates of inflation and trade unions were identified as the prime cause of Britain's declining economic competitiveness.

The Labour governments of the 1960s angered party members on numerous issues, such as Wilson's support for the American war in Vietnam. But intra-party conflict with the unions was the most damaging development of this time, assisting the growth of public perceptions of the unions as too powerful and irresponsible. Income policies featured in most years from 1961 until the election of 1979, and trade union reform was increasingly seen as an essential way to address the 'wage-price spiral'. The Labour government proposed reform in 1969 but retreated in the face of opposition both from the TUC and from within the government itself. The cause was then taken up by the succeeding Conservative administration, which legislated to restrict the unions but effectively abandoned its own policy before losing the general election of February 1974. Labour's slender victory was based on its lowest share of the vote since 1929, at 37.2 per cent. Though trade union membership continued to rise until 1979, the succeeding Labour government managed to reduce the incidence of strikes by combining incomes policies with a social contract, drawn up with the unions and unveiled in 1973, promising improvements in the social wage in return for wage restraint. Public spending under Labour peaked at 49.7 per cent of national income in 1975–6 but declined thereafter; inflation reached as high as 27 per cent, averaging 13 per cent for the decade. Public sector unions, now representing over half of TUC membership, justifiably rebelled against this combination of public expenditure cuts and double-digit inflation. A revolt of the low paid in the form of a strike wave of public sector workers in the winter of 1978–9 was the inevitable consequence, and the image of the unions as over-powerful and irresponsible was consolidated by the Conservatives.

The Labour Party membership revolt against the parliamentary leadership was not dampened by the Conservative election victory in 1979. The defection of working-class voters, many of them trade unionists, to the Conservatives, was interpreted by the Labour left as evidence of the failure of Labour governments to implement socialist policies. The new factor in this situation was sufficient trade union support for the approach embodied in the AES to enable it to dominate socialist thinking for the ten years up to 1981. This proposed statutory planning agreements, import controls, and public ownership of twenty-five major firms in order to affect the levels and direction of investment in an economy said to be dominated by oligopolies impervious to Keynesian macro-economic management techniques. *Labour's Programme 1973* had reflected this thinking in that it promised 'a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth to working people and their families'. But Harold Wilson's veto of the demand for sweeping

public ownership reinforced the argument that the PLP was a law unto itself, unresponsive to the demands of the mass party. A Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) was launched in 1973 to obtain constitutional reforms ensuring mandatory re-selection of MPs, election of the party leader by the whole party rather than by the PLP, and NEC determination of party manifestos. The shift to the left of many of the affiliated trade unions enabled the CLPD campaign to succeed in the first two of its demands – a development that persuaded some former Labour ministers that the party was under the control of extremists and had to be abandoned. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) was founded in March 1981 and, even though it only attracted twenty-eight Labour MPs, it helped to divide the opposition to Thatcher's Conservative government. At the general election of 1983 Labour recorded its lowest share of the vote since 1918 – 28.3 per cent – while the SDP in alliance with the Liberals secured 26 per cent. The Thatcher government's majority in parliament rose to 144 seats.

Voting studies had already detected a decline in partisan identification in the 1970s, and the decade was declared to be one of dealignment; class was no longer a reliable predictor of voting behaviour. The two-party system, though protected by the electoral system, was under threat. But Labour's electoral failings in the 1980s took place in the context of mass unemployment (peaking at 14 per cent in 1986), persistent double-digit inflation, the growth of regressive taxation, and widening income inequality. Why had so many working-class voters deserted Labour, given these facts? The PLP under Neil Kinnock's leadership from 1983 took the view that the leftward swing of the party had gone too far and had to be reversed. The party itself also had to be brought under control, a process of centralization that continued under Blair. Many trade unions, faced with falling membership and hostile legislation, saw the futility of continued confrontation with the Thatcher government, especially after the defeat of the miners' strike in 1984–5, and backed a comprehensive policy review after Labour's third consecutive defeat in 1987. This jettisoned policy remnants of the AES ascendancy, and by 1989 some observers perceived an emerging continental-style social democracy together with broad acceptance of elements of the Thatcherite programme.

Individual party membership had sunk to 311,000 by 1990. In Scotland, Labour appeared dominant, taking fifty Westminster seats in 1987. But this was based on just 42 per cent of the vote, and the nationalist case for independence was only strengthened by the Conservative ascendancy in the United Kingdom. The 'elective dictatorship' of the Conservative governments was highlighted both by its duration – eighteen years – and by its

radical policies and rhetoric, dominating an exceptionally centralized political system. The need for constitutional change in the United Kingdom was finally recognized by Labour under these circumstances and entered its 1992 manifesto. It was a commitment strengthened when John Smith became leader in 1992 and inherited by Blair when he succeeded Smith two years later. But Blair interpreted Labour's fourth successive general election defeat in 1992 as evidence that more had to be done to catch up with the Conservative Party by firmly aligning the party with 'aspirational' voters and distancing it from minorities and lost causes.²³ The strength of this conviction owed much to the economic recovery that had begun in 1992 and which eventually produced sixty-four consecutive financial quarters of economic growth up to 2008. The belief developed that the Thatcher reforms had made this possible. Trade union membership had sunk to 8 million in 1995, from over 13 million in 1979. The number and duration of strikes had greatly diminished. The rate of inflation was down to 3.5 per cent by 1997. Though economic growth was consumer-driven, neither that nor the growing deficit in the balance of payments seemed to matter. Blair and his shadow chancellor Gordon Brown began to reason that the Thatcher reforms had bequeathed a competitive advantage to the UK economy in an era of globalization. Footloose corporations could be drawn to economies with flexible labour markets, low pay, and an institutional ecology congenial to business, featuring relatively low taxes on high personal incomes and profits. The boom in finance underlined the idea that globalization suited the United Kingdom. So did the unexpected growth of the US economy coinciding with Bill Clinton's presidency, while Japan and the recently reunified Germany seemed victims, by contrast, of their own institutional rigidities.

Blair's creation of a docile, dissent-free New Labour, friendly to business and the aspirational voter, but distant from the trade unions, the party membership, and moribund socialism, won the 1997 election with a majority of 179 seats, over 100 of them held by women. The growth in ethnic minority representation continued more slowly, as it did in the other parties. Labour Party membership briefly rose to 420,000 in 1997 but fell thereafter, as did the size of the Labour vote, the voter turnout, and Labour's winning margin in the elections of 2001 and 2005. Among New Labour's major achievements must be counted the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998, which led to a consociational executive in Northern Ireland, and

23 P. Gould, *The Unfinished Revolution: How the Modernisers Saved the Labour Party* (London: Little Brown, 1998), pp. 24, 49–54, 258.

the devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales. But it drew back from electoral reform for UK elections. The scale of the 1997 election victory ended New Labour's apparent interest in the realignment of the left. Though it increased public spending on education, health, and social services, especially after 2001, and championed 'workfare' against welfare dependency, Labour made no attempt to address rising income, wealth, and regional inequalities. Corporate tax evasion was simply ignored. The rapid expansion of financial services since the late 1980s continued under the sign of self-regulation. Private business and marketization were encouraged in the public sector. There was no industrial policy and no revival of public housing. When the financial crisis came in 2008, the Labour governments could be blamed for more than negligence; they had held the City of London aloft as a success story, a brilliant example of the UK's comparative advantage in matters of political economy. The increased public spending of the New Labour governments was real, but much of it was eliminated in the succeeding regime of 'austerity'. The financial sector was saved by state intervention before Labour left office and continued to function on virtually the pre-2008 basis.

Though New Labour entered government in 1997 talking of an 'ethical foreign policy' and closer ties with the European Union (EU), Blair also saw the United Kingdom as a 'pivotal power' capable of playing a leading role in Europe while maintaining its 'special relationship' with the United States. But there was no sustained attempt to promote the EU, which Blair often publicly associated with over-regulation, rigid labour markets, and high taxation. Blair also championed 'liberal interventionism', which delivered success in Sierra Leone and Kosovo. His enthusiasm for the special relationship became unconditional after 2001 and led to a posture of unwavering support for US foreign policy, culminating in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, despite the opposition of Germany, France, and at least half of the British public. Iraq and the financial crisis were not the only legacies of the Blair years that counted against his followers when Labour returned to opposition in 2010. Blair's presidentialism and bypassing of Cabinet eclipsed most of his colleagues, who remained minor figures; there was no role for trade unions or party activists; local government continued to wither as it had for decades previously; many old industrial towns were untouched by the economic growth of 1992–2008; the challenge to Labour continued to grow in Scotland, and in 2015 Scottish Labour lost forty of its forty-one seats to the nationalists. The austerity policies that followed the financial collapse of 2008 exacerbated the discontent of those with greatest hostility towards the EU, many of whom linked their grievances to the spectacular growth of migration after 2004, an issue

that the New Labour governments mishandled, and UKIP exploited. The referendum on membership of the EU in 2016 left over 60 per cent of Labour MPs representing constituencies that had voted Leave. Even when Labour increased its share of the vote to 40 per cent in the June 2017 general election, from the 30.4 per cent recorded in 2015, the Conservatives also increased their working-class support, as well as the support of Leave voters and those with low educational qualifications – advantages strengthened again in December 2019 when the Labour vote fell back to 32 per cent and Corbyn was forced to resign as leader.

Labour-led social reform in Britain had only ever been fitful and looks even less likely in the post-EU future. Labour's longest period in government coincided with the nadir of both socialist and trade union influence within the party and the absence of any alternative to consumer capitalism in the minds of its leaders. But vision and radicalism will both be needed if the left is to meet the challenges of the Anthropocene.

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Social Democracy in Georgia

RONALD GRIGOR SUNY

In the first years after the First World War, social democrats in Europe celebrated the beleaguered socialist government in the briefly independent Republic of Georgia (1918–21). The senior statesman of the Second International, Karl Kautsky, travelled to the South Caucasus and wrote a laudatory book – *Georgien. Eine sozialdemokratische Bauernrepublik* (translated into English as *Georgia: A Social Democratic Peasant Republic – Impressions and Observations*) (1921) – that contrasted what the Georgian social democrats (formerly the Georgian Mensheviks) were doing while maintaining a democratic government in contrast to the one-party dictatorship then operating in Soviet Russia.¹ Almost simultaneously with the appearance of the small book, the communists invaded Georgia, and the social democrats were forced to flee to western Europe. Their flight ended an extraordinary three decades in which Marxist socialists dominated the national liberation movement in a largely peasant country, repeatedly won elections to the Russian imperial Duma (1906–12), successfully forged a cross-class alliance in Georgia that brought democratic socialists to power when the tsarist regime was overthrown in February/March 1917, and even provided major leaders (Nikoloz Chkheidze and Irakli Tsereteli) to the Petrograd Soviet in 1917. Georgia has the distinction of being the first country in the world where Marxists led a massive peasant movement (beginning in 1904), something that would become more familiar later in the twentieth century in other parts of the world.

The Marxist movement in Georgia originated in the 1890s as a counterweight to nationalist intellectuals, like the poet Ilia Chavchavadze, who were largely associated with the Georgian nobility, and pro-peasant Populists among the intelligentsia. As the Georgian noble elite declined as

¹ K. Kautsky, *Georgien. Eine sozialdemokratische Bauernrepublik. Eindrücke zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1921).

both a political and economic force in the second half of the nineteenth century, a younger generation of Marxist intellectuals, led by a petty nobleman from western Georgia, Noe Zhordania, replaced them as the operative political elite of the nation. Georgia existed on the periphery of the Russian Empire and experienced the repressive policies of the tsarist regime, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first decade of the twentieth century; yet its socialist leaders appreciated that their country had also benefited from association with Russia in complex ways. The road to civilization and modernity ran through Russia to Europe, and the Georgian social democrats generally advocated reform of imperial Russia rather than outright independence of Georgia. Zhordania and his associates began collaborating with the journal *Kvali* (*Furrow*), whose editor, the liberal Giorgi Tsereteli, soon dubbed them *mesame dasi* (the third group) and thus the historic successors to the 'enlighteners' of the 1860s (*pirveli dasi*, first group) and the liberal reformers of the 1870s (*meore dasi*, second group).

The young Marxists were committed to social progress in a Westernizing direction (a challenge to Chavchavadze's nostalgia for agrarian, seigniorial Georgia); a willingness to work with other nationalities (as opposed to the nationalists' passionate Armenophobia); and a reliance on the notion of class conflict both in their social analysis and in their political strategy (in contrast to Chavchavadze's ideal of social harmony under noble patriarchy).² In the mid-1890s Zhordania elaborated a class interpretation of Georgia's history and announced that 'Our country has already imperceptibly stood on the road of industry; the nation has already pushed its head into the capitalist vice.'³ Applying historical materialism to the history of Georgia's national formation, Zhordania argued that, while 'language is the first sign of nationality', only real material transformation linked the disparate regions of Georgia and led to the consolidation of the nation. He demystified the nation and emphasized that it was the product of social forces. Just as economic development was creating a new Georgia, so in the future the national and the social struggles had to be combined in order to win freedom for the nation. In this vision Georgians had an ostensibly supra-nationalist analysis that offered a means of overcoming the dual oppression of Russian autocracy

2 *Moambe* (*Bulletin*) 1894, nos. 5–6. For more complete discussions of the conflicts in Georgian intellectual life at the end of the nineteenth century, see J. W. R. Parsons, 'The Emergence and Development of the National Question in Georgia, 1801–1921', PhD dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1987, pp. 298–321; R. G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994 [1988]), ch. 6, pp. 113–43.

3 *Moambe* 1894, nos. 5–6.

and Armenian capital but at the same time tied Georgia's future to a liberated Russia.

In the first years of the new century the young Marxists tentatively made contact with local workers at the railroad yards, many of them Russian, and set up propaganda circles that brought in Georgians as well. The rapid expansion of labour activity infused workers with a new confidence and increased resentment against manipulation by intellectuals. Georgian workers, in particular, were wary of dominance by intellectuals and preferred operating their own circles with guidance from the Marxists. When Russian social democracy split into the Menshevik and Bolshevik branches (1903–5), the Georgians on the whole joined the Mensheviks (with notable exceptions like Joseph Stalin). Both Menshevik intellectuals and their worker constituents preferred the approach of the more moderate social democrats, who promoted greater worker initiative in the years before 1905, to that of the Bolsheviks, following the strategy outlined by their leader Vladimir Lenin in his influential pamphlet *Chto delat?* (*What Is to Be Done?*), who talked about the importance of direction from social democrats and appointing committee members in order to keep members safe from police spies and arrest.

In the revolutionary years 1905–7, the armed struggle between workers, peasants, and the state was most intense at the very edges of the empire, in the western borderlands of Russia, Poland, the Baltic region, and in the Caucasus. The revolutionary movement in the South Caucasus (referred to at the time as *Zakavkaze*, Transcaucasia), and particularly in Georgia, grew rapidly with the economic depression at the turn of the century and the eruption of peasant resistance in western Georgia. Even before the news of Bloody Sunday (9 January 1905) reached the Caucasus, local workers and peasants were already in incipient revolt against the tsarist state. When the social democrats reluctantly held back from using violence, workers took matters in their own hands and murdered foremen and directors, even workers who refused to participate in a strike. The workers considered that they were acting morally when they turned their weapons against those whom they saw as oppressors. But rather than indiscriminate rage, workers and peasants targeted specific threats to their safety or violators of their sense of justice. The socialists in general opposed indiscriminate attacks on enterprises or employers, so-called economic terrorism, but they often gave in to pressure from the workers or the rebel peasants of Guria in western Georgia. Bloody confrontations between workers, peasants, soldiers, and the tsarist police forced both factions of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Rossiiskaia Sotsial'demokraticheskaia Rabochaia Partia, RSDRP), Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, to accept the notion of 'the self-defence

of the workers', and they formed armed combat units of socialist workers and peasants to resist the attacks of anti-socialist and antisemitic 'counter-revolutionaries'.

What began as self-defence soon metamorphosed into guerrilla bands and terrorist gangs prepared to assassinate enemy officials and rob banks to finance the cause. Both Stalin, then known as Koba, and other young militants quickly organized such gangs. Workers in Batumi carried out several terrorist acts in 1904–5, including the assassination of Prince Levan Gurieli, the head of the police in the Batumi region. The Armenian revolutionary party, Dashnaktsutyun, killed the governor of Baku, Prince M. A. Nakashidze, and the social democrats carried out the execution of Lieutenant General Fedor Griaznov, the chief of the Caucasian Military Headquarters, who a month earlier had ruthlessly suppressed rebellious workers in Tiflis. The newly emergent party of Georgian Socialist Federalists, non-Marxist socialist nationalists influenced by the Russian socialist revolutionaries, carried out their own attacks. The most prominent target of the revolutionary assassins was the patriarch of Georgian letters, Ilia Chavchavadze, but who killed him and his wife remains a mystery to this day.

In the revolutionary years 1905–7 all of Caucasian society was in turmoil. A rough alliance formed between workers and liberal elements in the middle classes – the very cross-class coalition that social democrats had imagined was required to bring about revolution. Peasants as well were part of a broad social movement that the government seemed unable to restrain.⁴ The centre of the peasant uprising was the southwestern province of Guria, once an independent Georgian principality and long a site of rebellion. Since the late nineteenth century, the peasants and petty nobles of Guria had suffered from too little land for a growing population and falling prices for their corn. The coming of global trade and production for the agricultural market had a devastating effect on the smallholders of Guria, who were at one and the same time victims of American, Australian, and Indian competition and burdened by state taxes and obligations to their former lords.⁵ Many Gurian peasants worked in the factories of the Black Sea port town Batumi,

4 For the origins of the Gurian peasant revolt, see the excellent chapter in S. F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 129–58; for historical background to the revolt, see K. Church, 'From Dynastic Principality to Imperial District: The Incorporation of Guria into the Russian Empire to 1856', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2001.

5 Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, pp. 144–54; Church, 'From Dynastic Principality to Imperial District', *passim*.

and there they met local socialists. Though they looked to the Mensheviks for leadership, Gurian peasants often took matters into their own hands. They boycotted landlords, refused to work for them, threatened them with death if they did not comply with their demands, and murdered the agents of the nobles who resisted them. Tsarist officials fled in fear, and an autonomous 'Gurian Republic' was proclaimed in the province.

At first Georgian social democrats were wary of joining the peasant movement. Orthodox Marxists, given their conviction that the most reliable revolutionary force would be the industrial working class, believed that the events in France after 1848 and in 1871 had shown that peasants could not be socialist and would turn on the workers. Many of the prominent Georgian Mensheviks – Zhordania, Chkheidze, Noe Ramishvili, Evgeni Gegechkori, Noe Khomeriki, and Konstantine Kandelaki (all later prominent in the independent Georgian Menshevik republic) – were from the region and knew it well, but it took the young activist Grigol Uratadze to convince his elders that the party must become involved.⁶ Once engaged, the Georgian Mensheviks soon dominated the movement, despite the resistance of the 'Russian' Menshevik leaders who remained suspicious of this 'petit bourgeois' rebellion. Within months a basically 'democratic', non-socialist movement brought tens of thousands of supporters into the Menshevik ranks, giving them not only the upper hand in the Caucasus but larger numbers of delegates to future Russian social democratic party congresses, voters in the state Duma elections, and the base for their eventual rise to governing independent Georgia.⁷ The Bolshevik notion of narrow party membership simply did not work for this mass movement, and Bolshevism faded in Georgia into an irrelevant sect. Many Bolsheviks, like Stalin, left Georgia to make their career in Baku, the more 'proletarian' oil capital on the Caspian Sea, or in Russia proper.

Once by the late spring of 1905 Georgia became Menshevik, it remained under the sway of the heirs of *mesame dasi* until the Bolshevik Red Army drove Zhordania and his government out of Tiflis in February 1921. The Mensheviks' initial victory in the factional struggle flowed from influential personalities like Zhordania, Noe Ramishvili, and Khomeriki, who bested Koba (Stalin), Mikha Tskhakaia, and other Bolsheviks in the lengthy debates

6 G. Uratadze, *Vospominaniia gruzinskogo sotsial-demokrata* [Reminiscences of a Georgian Social Democrat] (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1968), pp. 44–6.

7 Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, p. 132: 'Georgian delegates made up a quarter of the Menshevik wing at the RSDLP Stockholm congress in 1906 and almost a third (28.9 per cent) at the Fifth RSDLP (London) Congress of 1907. At the Fifth Congress, around 30 per cent of all Georgian delegates were from Guria', which Bolshevik Grigorii Aleksinskii called the 'citadel of Menshevism'.

over organization and strategy. The Menshevik message resonated with Georgian workers on at least two levels. Its anti-Leninist critique of dominance by intellectuals harked back to the local tradition of worker control of committees. Furthermore, the Mensheviks were more closely connected to *mesame dasi* and *Kvali*, which retained great prestige among workers. And they ‘spoke Georgian’ to their followers – not only in the literal sense (Koba and the Bolsheviks did that as well) – but in a national sense of fostering the Georgian aspects of the movement more intensely than social democracy’s inter-ethnic character. From 1905 to the early 1920s, Menshevism was the actual national liberation movement of the Georgians, sweeping before it all its rivals – Bolsheviks, Socialist Federalists, and nationalists.



Fig. 5.1 Noe Nikolaevich Zhordania, Menshevik and president of the Georgian Republic, with his two daughters, 1920–1. (Courtesy of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)

Zhordania's victory was not only a personal triumph that stemmed from his prestige in his homeland. He was a tough infighter, ready to caricature the Bolsheviks to the advantage of his faction. He played on the genuine fears of the Georgian workers that they were being marginalized in their own movement. Unwittingly the Bolsheviks aided him, for they appeared to act precisely in the ways that Zhordania described. In a letter to Lenin, the Bolshevik Aleksandr Stopani admitted as much and called for a change in party practices. In 'meetings with the Mensheviks', he wrote, 'workers on the committees expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that non-workers are in charge of all work. It is essential to put local, influential workers in the centre of the organization.'⁸

For all the effort of those around the newspaper *Iskra* (*The Spark*) up to 1903, and the leaders of both the Bolshevik and the Menshevik factions up to 1905, the RSDRP failed to co-ordinate its members around a shared strategy. Instead of creating a disciplined organization with a common, coherent programme and marshalling its strength to mobilize working people, social democrats, in exile, in Russia proper, and in the Caucasus, spun their wheels in the muddy byways of factional conflicts. Zhordania was forced to deal with a young militant, Stalin, who relentlessly polemicized with his elders. Even so, despite dissipating time and energy in internal affairs, they managed at times to stimulate, at other times to channel, mass activity into a broad political struggle against autocracy, to redirect particular local and material grievances into a radical challenge to the regime.

Exiled in Geneva and anxious about the turn that events in Russia had taken, Lenin re-evaluated his tactics in 1905 and called for expansion of the secret party committees, the building of subcommittees, and the recruiting of younger people. He repeatedly claimed that he wanted a broad workers' movement, which would possess its own organizations and be allied with a tight organization of revolutionary social democrats. The latter would include both intellectuals and workers, for Lenin opposed either excluding intellectuals from the 'workers' party' as some *ouvrierists* may have preferred or keeping out workers as some radical committeemen advocated.⁹ The social democrats, whatever

8 *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 5, 40 (1925), pp. 22–7; *Perepiska V. I. Lenina i rukovodimyykh im uchrezhdenii RSDRP s partiinymi organizatsiiami, 1905–1907. Sbornik dokumentov v piati tomov* [Correspondence of V. I. Lenin and the Institutions of the RSDLP He Led with Party Organizations, 1905–1907. Collection of Documents in Five Volumes], vol. 1, book 2 (Moscow: Mysl, 1979), pp. 147–9.

9 *Ouvrierist*, from the French word for 'worker' (*ouvrier*), was a term used among Marxists in Europe to describe those that held that the movement and its party should be made up purely of workers. Few in Russia took such a position, though the accusation of *rabocheliubstva* (worker-loving) was made against opponents who denigrated the role of intellectuals.

their social origins, were charged with sending their forces among all classes of the population to prepare 'the direct struggle for freedom'.¹⁰ Yet even as he favoured placing workers on committees, Lenin opposed election of social democratic committees within Russia because of the danger of discovery by the police. In autocratic Russia social democrats had to be *konspirativnyi* (secretive). Socialists could preserve their organizations only by adhering to the need for secrecy.

While many in and around the party were frustrated and confused by the squabbles that led to the schism of the Social Democratic Party, by 1905 each faction gradually became clearer about its differences with the other, and not only formed a coherent reading of the political situation and the strategies to be derived from it, but became convinced of the reprehensible qualities of its opponents. The shared language and political culture of social democracy divided bitterly into two antagonistic movements. Members of both factions desperately wanted the party to achieve the unity that had never been obtained, but in the struggle for dominance of one understanding of the movement's needs over another, the personal and political differences that had shaken the party in 1903 hardened into what would eventually become two rival political parties in the revolutionary year 1917.

Even though polemicists on both sides exaggerated the views of the other, fundamental differences separated the factions. First, the Bolsheviks emphasized that socialist *theory* came from outside the working class, and even though workers might *instinctively* move towards socialism, the powerful ideological hegemony of bourgeois ideas required social democrats to accelerate and facilitate the infusion of socialist consciousness in the workers. The Mensheviks argued that life itself pushes workers towards becoming socialist, that there is a natural gravitation towards socialism, and claimed that Lenin wanted 'the complete dominance of the intelligentsia in the party and the subordination of the proletariat'.¹¹

Secondly, Bolsheviks desired a narrower, tighter, more centralized party with appointment of committees rather than local elections, which they considered dangerous in an autocratic police state. Mensheviks advocated election of committees by members and wanted a broader party that

10 V. I. Lenin, 'Samoderzhavie i proletariat' ['Autocracy and the Proletariat'], *Vpered* 1 (22 December 1904 [4 January 1905]), in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Collected Works] (hereafter PSS), 5th edn (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1958–65), IX, pp. 126–36.

11 N. Khomeriki and N. Ramishvili, 'Bol'shinstvo' ili 'Men'shinstvo'? ['Bolshevism' or 'Menshevism?'] (Geneva: Tipografiia Partii, 1905), p. 11. This pamphlet had a foreword by Fedor Dan and an appendix by Irakli Tsereteli.

included the maximum number of supporters and sympathizers of social democracy. For Mensheviks, discipline and initiative came from the workers themselves; for Lenin, discipline had to be imposed by the party. Both factions claimed they wanted more workers on committees and denigrated the opportunism of intellectuals, which each claimed was characteristic of the other.

As good Marxists, both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks agreed that the present revolution could only be a bourgeois democratic revolution. As Lenin put it, 'Only the most ignorant people can ignore the bourgeois character of the present democratic revolution; only the most naïve optimists can forget how little as yet the mass of the workers know of the aims of socialism and of the methods of achieving it . . . Whoever wants to move towards socialism by another path other than political democracy will inevitably arrive at absurd and reactionary conclusions in the economic and in the political sense.'¹² Mensheviks in general were more concerned about political democracy than was Lenin, who saw parliaments and elections as means rather than as ends. Real democracy for him would be achieved only with socialism and the dispossession of bourgeois power. From their stronger commitment to the bourgeois revolution and democracy, the Mensheviks in Russia favoured a closer relationship with the liberal bourgeoisie and worried that militancy would frighten the bourgeoisie into the arms of the government.

Georgian Mensheviks tended to be to the left of their Russian comrades. In many ways they seemed to be the most 'Bolshevik' of Mensheviks. Georgian Mensheviks were ready to ally with the peasantry, and, like Lenin, they appreciated the revolutionary potential of the villagers, while their Russian comrades were uncomfortable with such an alliance. Georgian Mensheviks, unlike the Russian faction, were also more willing to engage in terrorism and revolutionary action, as were the local Bolsheviks. In Caucasia both factions employed terror, formed armed units, and fought the tsarist police and army. Georgian Mensheviks were committed to an armed insurrection, as were the Bolsheviks, but they usually chose to use arms only for self-defence.¹³ Lenin was critical of the Georgian Mensheviks, who preferred working towards an elected republic rather than enthusiastically supporting an armed insurrection.¹⁴ Lenin

¹² Lenin, *PSS*, x1, pp. 16, 37.

¹³ The Bolshevik Pilipe Makharadze made this point in his book *1905 tseli amierkavkasiashi* [*The Year 1905 in Transcaucasia*] (Tiflis: Sakhelgami, 1926), which is cited in V. Tsuladze, 'Bol'shevizm v Gruzii' ['Bolshevism in Georgia'], *Menshevik Collection*, Columbia University, pp. 4–5.

¹⁴ Lenin, *PSS*, x111, pp. 50–4.

saw this as 'betraying the revolution and converting the proletariat into miserable stooges of the bourgeois classes'.¹⁵

The revolution and its repression in Caucasia were marked by extraordinary violence.¹⁶ For a brief time the rebel peasants and workers effectively eliminated the writ of the tsar in much of the Caucasus, and the tsarist regime responded as colonial masters with massive and bloody reprisals. Social democrats worked with local officials in Tiflis to keep the ethnic tensions between Muslims and Armenians in the city from exploding into bloodshed as had occurred in Baku. The viceroy of the Caucasus, Count Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov, gave them arms from the arsenal to keep the peace, and though the socialists had agreed to return them, they did not. But once the tsarist authority was able to bring its troops back from the disastrous defeat in the Far East in the war against Japan, the military systematically suppressed the rebel movements.

The post-revolutionary years 1907–14 were a time when insurrection no longer seemed possible, and even Lenin was prepared for his faction to participate in the elections to the state Duma. The first social democrats to take up parliamentary politics were the Georgians, and they effectively used the legal means established after 1905 to become the tribune not only of Georgians but of oppositional Russians as well. In the new semi-legal public sphere granted by Tsar Nicholas II in October 1905, the chamber of the Duma reverberated with rhetoric directed against the autocracy. Georgian Mensheviks led the social democratic faction in the four state dumas and were among the most articulate and recognized spokesmen for the opposition to tsarism from 1906 to 1917. In 1906, Zhordania was elected as a deputy, but when he protested at the dismissal of the First Duma, he had to go into hiding. Irakli Tsereteli was a powerful presence in the Second Duma, but when it was dismissed, he was exiled with other social democratic deputies to Siberia, where he remained until 1917.

The Mensheviks in the Duma were primarily intellectuals, many of them practised in writing and speaking in public. In the Fourth Duma, elected in 1912, the most influential social democrats were South Caucasian professionals: the journalist Chkheidze and the lawyer Akaki Chkhenkeli, both Georgian, and an engineer from Baku, Matvei Skobelev. The Bolshevik

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁶ The best short account of the 1905 revolution in Caucasia, and one that emphasizes the extraordinary violence of that year in that place, is A. Ter Minassian, 'Particularités de la révolution de 1905 en Transcaucasie', in F.-X. Coquin and C. Gervais-Francelle (eds.), 1905, *La première révolution russe* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1986), pp. 315–37.

deputies were workers, untried in politics, and one of them was a prominent police spy, Roman Malinowski, who turned in many of his 'comrades' to the police, one of whom was Stalin. Though the Mensheviks dominated the Duma caucus, the social democrats were far from united. The Georgians worried that their Russian Menshevik comrades were losing the workers because of their lukewarm attitude towards strikes. From roughly 1912 to 1914, ordinary workers in large cities revived the labour movement, and in Saint Petersburg, the Bolsheviks reaped the whirlwind of growing labour radicalism. The popularity of the Russian Mensheviks declined as support for the Bolsheviks rose.

With revolution defeated, the tsarist state once again pushed a Russifying agenda, and Georgians used the Duma as a platform to express their opposition. The Menshevik deputy Evgeni Gegechkori spoke out in defence of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which, he said, had suffered for a century under Russian dominance, and in favour of cultural and linguistic rights for Georgians. 'In Georgia, in our homeland, they pass judgement in courts through translators; in schools they drive out the Georgian language and instruction takes place by the so-called natural method, once again through translators; and now holy rights and funerals will be carried out also with the help of translators.'¹⁷ But the government did not heed its non-Russian critics, or even the tsar's own viceroy in the Caucasus, who repeatedly called for improving the treatment of the peoples he governed.¹⁸

In the Marxist movement in the Russian Empire, South Caucasian socialists were among the principal theorists who dealt with the so-called 'national question' (*natsional'nyi vopros*), the heated issue of how the multinational post-revolutionary state would be organized. The Georgian Mensheviks, particularly Chkhenkeli, gravitated after 1905 towards a more culturally nationalist position. Influenced by Otto Bauer and the Austromarxists, Zhordania adopted their view of extraterritorial national-cultural autonomy, that is, that nationality should be protected and politically recognized even outside the national territory. 'The fate of the Georgian language', he wrote, 'interests a Georgian no matter where he lives . . . This means that management of all cultural-national affairs ought to be decided by the interested nation itself.'¹⁹ Appalled by this concession to nationalism, Lenin favoured a centralized state and opposed federation, though he strongly advocated the right of all nations to self-determination, even to the point of separation from

17 His speech was reprinted in *Zvezda* 15, 51 (8 March 1912), p. 21.

18 I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem' let upravleniia Kavkazom* [*Most Humble Report on Eight Years of Governance of the Caucasus*] (St Petersburg, 1913), pp. 6–16.

19 *Chveni tskhovreba* [*Our Life*], no. 12, July 1912.

Russia. He anointed Stalin as his principal spokesman on this question, and, just before his exile to Siberia in 1913, Stalin published an important pamphlet titled *Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros* (*Marxism and the National Question*) supporting Lenin's notion of a single state with only regional autonomy. On the eve of the First World War, far from the capital in South Caucasia, Georgians were largely united around their Menshevik leadership; Armenians were divided between a majority following the nationalists and a minority aligned with the Russian socialist parties; and Muslims, the poorest and most socially disadvantaged of the peoples of the Caucasus, were still essentially indifferent to national politics. While ethnic identity had long been part of the loyalties of many in South Caucasia, political nationalism grew slowly, and quite late, but it accelerated during the First World War and after the outbreak of the revolution.

On 1 March 1917, a cryptic message was telegraphed by the Mensheviks in the state Duma to their comrades in Tiflis: 'Mtavrobadze is dead.' The Caucasian socialists understood that the government (*mtavroba* in Georgian) had fallen, and within hours the recently appointed viceroy of the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, called in the mayor of Tiflis, Aleksandr Khatsov, to inform him of the end of the Romanov regime. Two days later elections to soviets of workers' deputies were organized by the socialists in Tiflis and Baku. Most Mensheviks conceived of the revolution as 'bourgeois-democratic', and this view was accepted by the pro-peasant Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs). Although suspicious of the Provisional Government set up in early March in Petrograd, the moderate wing of social democracy was willing to support it as legitimate and to restrain workers from seizing power in the name of their soviets, the councils elected by workers and soldiers. The one major party opposed to the Provisional Government was the Bolshevik wing of social democracy. On his return to Russia in April 1917, Lenin outlined a radical programme for his followers: 'All Power to the Soviets'. This strategy indicated moving beyond the bourgeois-democratic revolution towards a socialist revolution, which was thought possible if workers' revolutions in more developed countries in the West came to Russia's aid.

In the South Caucasus Bolsheviks were popular primarily in Baku. Led by Stepan Shahumian, they opposed the 'revolutionary defensist' policies of the moderate socialists, who favoured continuing the war effort until a 'democratic peace' could be achieved. The Bolsheviks' slogan of 'Soviet Power' called for a government of the lower classes – what in Russian was called *demokratiia* (democracy) – and the disenfranchisement of the

bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, officialdom, and the clergy. Urged on by the central Russian Bolshevik leadership, local Bolsheviks provoked a formal break with the Mensheviks, which came relatively late in South Caucasia (6 June in Tiflis, 24 June in Baku). Though they remained a powerful political force in Baku, as a result of the party schism, the Bolsheviks remained an impotent faction in Georgia, where the party organizations and soviets were firmly in the hands of the Mensheviks led by Zhordania.

The Georgian Mensheviks once again proved to be more militant than the Russian Mensheviks. In 1917, their comrades in the north supported the Coalition Government of socialist and 'bourgeois' ministers formed in Petrograd in May, while the Mensheviks of Georgia at first voted overwhelmingly to keep socialists from entering a coalition government. But while the Mensheviks controlled the workers' soviet in Tiflis, the soldiers' soviet, dominated by Russian soldiers, was led by the SRs, who voted to support the Coalition Government. The conflict between the workers in Tiflis, largely Georgian and Menshevik, and the soldiers, primarily Russian and favouring the SRs and even the Bolsheviks, came to a head on 25 June at a demonstration organized by the Bolsheviks. An estimated 10,000 soldiers shouted down Menshevik orators and adopted a Bolshevik resolution calling for a government based on the soviets. The Tiflis Mensheviks, fearful that the militants might try to seize power in the city, banned meetings of soldiers in the popular central Alexander Garden, warned the public of the danger of counter-revolution, and made peace with Petrograd by approving the Coalition Government.

As in Russia proper, so in South Caucasia, the pace of the revolution quickened towards the end of the summer as the mood of both workers and soldiers grew ever more hostile towards collaboration with the propertied classes (*tsentsove obshchestvo*). On 2 September, the Tiflis soviet once again came out against coalition with the bourgeoisie and advocated a 'democratic socialist government' made up of all the socialist parties. But in Petrograd, which was the centre and accelerator of the revolution, it was primarily the Bolsheviks who benefited from the deteriorating economic situation, the inconclusive war, and the increasing suspicion of the upper and middle classes. In the aftermath of General Lavr Kornilov's abortive attempt to establish a military dictatorship in the capital in August, Bolshevik resolutions found new support in South Caucasian soviets. As militant opponents of the war, the Leninists gradually garnered support from soldiers, displacing the SRs in the Baku and Tiflis garrisons and at the Caucasian Front facing Ottoman Turkish forces in the autumn of 1917. As the most vocal critics of

the feeble Coalition Government and the local executive committees and dumas, and the most extreme proponents of bringing the war to an end, the Bolsheviks gained credence as social antagonisms between the *verkhi* (top) and *nizi* (bottom) of society grew sharper. As Shahumian, the acknowledged leader of the Caucasian Bolsheviks, exclaimed in early October: 'Unrest is growing everywhere, and land is being seized, etc.; our task is to stand at the head of the revolution and to take power in our hands.'

When news of the October Revolution reached Tiflis on 25 October, reports circulated that the Bolsheviks would attempt to seize power in Baku. But in South Caucasia the Mensheviks proved to be much more decisive than the local Bolsheviks. Shahumian hesitated to provoke an inter-ethnic bloodletting by instigating civil war in Baku, while Zhordania's forces boldly seized the Tiflis arsenal at the end of November, thus disarming the pro-Bolshevik garrison. The balance of social forces in Georgia shifted in December, as the Caucasian Front dissolved and Russia's soldiers 'voted with their feet' to end the war and return home. As the Russian army melted away, and the Caucasus was exposed to the newly confident Ottoman army, the Caucasian Bolsheviks lost their most potent supporters outside Baku, the Russian soldiers, and one of the most important elements favouring preservation of the link to post-October Russia. Fearful of the Turkish threat, Armenians remained the most pro-Russian element in South Caucasia, while the Georgians flirted with inviting the Germans into their country.

Early in 1918, Soviet Russia withdrew from the First World War, and the Ottoman Turkish armies launched an offensive into South Caucasia towards Baku. In February a South Caucasian parliament, the Seim, began to meet in Tiflis, but it soon became clear that relations between the three major nationalities were becoming increasingly strained. Pressured by the Ottomans, South Caucasia gradually broke its ties to Russia. The Ottomans occupied Batumi, and a week later, on 22 April 1918, South Caucasian leaders declared an independent 'federative republic', the *Zakavskaiia Federativnaia Respublika* (Transcaucasian Federative Republic), and sent off a delegation to negotiate with the Ottomans. With the Ottomans advancing, the federative republic based in Tiflis became untenable. Armenians were actively fighting the Ottomans, while Caucasian Muslims were sympathetic to them. Georgians gravitated towards the Germans, while Armenians preferred the Western Allies. At the end of May 1918, the Transcaucasian Republic disintegrated into three separate independent states. Georgia declared its independence on 26 May, and Armenia and Azerbaijan did so two days later. South Caucasia pulled away from Russia, though none of the major political parties

had desired the ending of that tie. All feared that the social and political clashes of the first revolutionary year would metastasize into bitter and bloody conflict between socialists and nationalists, fragmenting along ethnic lines. In 1918, the three small republics were set adrift between an expansionist Ottoman Empire and a retreating Soviet Russia.

The Georgian social democrats established their republic reluctantly, forced by circumstances beyond their control. The more internationalist aspects of their socialism evaporated as they identified most immediately with the national cause of independence and sovereignty. Under Menshevik rule for two and a half years (May 1918–February 1921), Georgia managed to evolve a democratic constitutional political system, though it never achieved full economic stability and physical security. Georgian social democracy was well-grounded in both the working class and the peasantry. Returning to Georgia after the Bolshevik victory in October 1917, Irakli Tsereteli advised his comrades in Georgia not to tolerate two state authorities as the Petrograd socialists had. Set up a strong inclusive democratic government, he urged, but restrict the local soviet to expressing the interests of the working class.²⁰ Having effectively eliminated the internal threat from the Bolsheviks by disbanding the Tiflis garrison, the Mensheviks decided as soon as they declared independence to close *Znamia truda* (*Banner of Labour*), the local Socialist Revolutionary newspaper, which had opposed independence. All social groups within the country soon came around to favour independence, and the social democrats, who had begun as the self-proclaimed representatives of the working class, and later of the peasantry, emerged as the voice of the Georgian nation as a whole. This profound ideological shift towards nationalism divided them from the Russian and Armenian social democrats and the communists in Soviet Russia and the South Caucasus.

Despite the economic decline and social unrest in the country, the social democrats retained their popularity with the ethnic Georgian majority and managed to combine democratic politics with mild social reforms. In the elections of February 1919 to the Georgian Constituent Assembly, in which non-Georgians were also represented, the newly named Georgian Social Democratic Party (*Sakartvelos Sotsial-demokratiuli Partia*) won over 80 per cent of the vote. To maintain the support of the peasants who made up the majority of the population, the government distributed land to them. The bulk of the land was taken from the noble landlords and turned into private property largely held by smallholding peasants, but nobles also kept

20 Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, pp. 194–5.

lands. The government was able to quell a peasant uprising in 1919 in Guria, where peasants were not pleased that nobles had retained some of their holdings. While not as radical as either the Bolshevik (SR-inspired) land decree of 1917 or an earlier Caucasian land reform of 1917–18 that formally took all the land away from the nobles without compensation, the Georgian Republic's reform seemed appropriate to the Mensheviks' understanding of the historical stage of the revolution at hand. Zhordania admitted that the Georgian state, limited by the level of social development, 'cannot avoid one way or another serving . . . the interests of the bourgeoisie'.²¹ Although the Mensheviks had too little time in power to radically transform their country, they managed to establish schools and found a national university, now Tbilisi State University. But projects to grant ethnic minorities some degree of political autonomy were never implemented.

Ironically, the Georgian nation-state was formed and led by Marxists who had expected a democratic revolution in Russia that would solve at one sweep the people's ethnic and social oppression. Instead, the Marxists found themselves at the head of an independent 'bourgeois' state, the managers of the 'democratic revolution' in one small country. Zhordania, the first prime minister of the republic, understood that in a bourgeois democratic revolution the social democrats required the unity of the workers, peasants, and middle classes. The greatest danger came not from the weak aristocracy or bourgeoisie in Georgia but from the peasant majority, a danger that was in large part remedied by carrying out the land reform that the peasants desired. As for urban industry and commerce, the first Georgian republic maintained a capitalist system, unlike Soviet Russia in the years of civil war. Menshevik Georgia exemplified the social democratic ideal – a working class deferring to its socialist intelligentsia, prepared to follow its lead in building a democratic nation-state, and willing to wait for the distant victory of socialism.²² On his visit to Georgia, Kautsky saw this bourgeois revolution at first hand:

It was left for the revolution to take the land from the feudal nobles, to provide the poor peasant with land, and to change the leaseholder into a freeholder. This was no socialistic but a middle-class revolution, but the conditions rendered it necessary, and it took place. We Marxians are distinguished from utopian socialists by the fact that we recognise that Socialism is only possible under specific circumstances. What it is incumbent on us to do is always suggested by the circumstances which arise.²³

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195. ²² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

²³ K. Kautsky, *Georgia: A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic*, see www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1921/georgia/cho2.htm.

Dangers lurked on every frontier of the fledgling republic. As Kautsky put it, 'However favoured Georgia may be by nature, and however rational the democratic methods of its socialist government, its situation was anything but brilliant.'²⁴ The Georgian invitation to the Germans to send troops to Georgia was meant to discourage attack from outside by the Bolsheviks or the Ottomans. The Ottomans took Batumi and other southern Georgian regions, but the Germans limited the ambitions of their Turkish allies. After the defeat of the Central Powers in the First World War, British and other Allied forces entered Georgia, to the dismay of the Georgian government, which had preferred the Germans. As former friends of Germany, Menshevik Georgia, unlike independent Armenia, was suspect in the eyes of the Allied Powers. The Georgians faced General Anton Denikin's White forces in the northwest and fought a brief war with Armenia over border regions. There were internal fractures as well. The republic was unable to secure the loyalty of the Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples of the west and north, and Georgian troops bloodily repressed separatist movements while keeping local Bolsheviks at bay. Leading Communists were jailed until the signing on 7 May 1920 of the Treaty of Moscow, by which the Soviet government recognized independent Georgia *de jure* in exchange for the legalization of the local communists and guarantees that no hostile armed forces would be permitted in Georgia.

Not only did the Mensheviks have the support of the great majority of the Georgian people, but they also managed to establish a stable multiparty democracy and begin a programme of social and economic reform. Overwhelming popularity in the country made it possible for them to rule through persuasion rather than naked coercion. There was no systematic revolutionary terror practised by Georgian Marxists as was the case in Soviet Russia during the years of civil war (1918–21). Unquestionably, independent Georgia had an excellent chance for political survival. The central Soviet government in Moscow, however, did not permit the Mensheviks to demonstrate the potential for democratic socialism in a post-revolutionary state. 'Georgia was Menshevikist,' Kautsky wrote. 'Therefore, its death sentence was pronounced in Moscow.'²⁵

By 1920, a powerful group within the Bolshevik party was pushing for an uprising within Georgia, to be followed by an invasion by the Red Army. Though Lenin, the head of the Soviet government in Moscow, initially opposed this cynical disregard for the evident influence of the Georgian social

²⁴ Ibid. ²⁵ Ibid.

democrats, he backed down in the face of the *fait accompli* engineered by Stalin and his close collaborator Sergo Orjonikidze. In February 1921, the Red Army marched into Georgia, and many of the Mensheviks fled to Europe. Three years later the social democrats, exiled near Paris, organized an uprising by those of their comrades living underground in Georgia. The local communist government brutally suppressed the rebels and executed many of their leaders, among them Noe Khomeriki and Valiko Jugheli. The national revolution led by democratic socialists was over. By April 1921 the whole of South Caucasia had come under the rule of local communists, and the Mensheviks were forced to dissolve their party organizations within the Soviet state.

For seventy-one years Georgia lived within the limits set by the more radical heirs of the original Georgian social democracy, those few Bolsheviks, now organized into the Communist Party, who managed to survive the years of tsarist oppression, revolution, and civil war and take the country with the help of the Red Army. One veteran of the Georgian movement, Joseph Stalin, continued his spectacular rise to power to become the all-powerful General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the brutal transformer of peasant Georgia into an urban, industrial state. Social democracy of the Menshevik variety remained a distant memory, tainted forever by the self-proclaimed 'socialist' experiment of Soviet power. When Georgia became independent from the USSR in 1991, few of the politically active were interested in resurrecting the programme of the Georgian Mensheviks.

Fleeing from Tiflis in February 1921, the Menshevik government moved to Batumi, and from there on board the *Ernest Renan* to Istanbul and eventually to France. From exile in Europe, and their headquarters in a chateau in Leuville-sur-Orge, outside Paris, the exiled Georgian Mensheviks maintained a frail opposition to the Soviets. They declared themselves the government of Georgia in exile and transferred much of their archives to the Harvard University Library. Efforts were made by the Georgian representatives, Irakli Tsereteli and Chkheidze, to have the Western powers at the Versailles Conference recognize their government *de jure*, but the Allies refused admission to Georgia, granting the republic only *de facto* recognition. The League of Nations, however, twice adopted resolutions supporting Georgian sovereignty. For a time, Great Britain, France, Poland, Belgium, Liberia, and Mexico recognized the government headed by Zhordania as the legitimate government of Georgia. But its legation in Paris, headed by Sosipatre Asatiani, was closed in 1933 following the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between France and the Soviet Union (29 November 1932).

The exiled Georgians were intractable enemies of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet government considered the exiled Mensheviks to be a threat. In 1930, a Soviet agent assassinated the former minister of the interior Noe Ramishvili. The Mensheviks' supporters in the International Committee for Georgia (Association internationale pour la Géorgie) and its president Jean Martin, editor of the *Journal de Genève*, attempted but failed to prevent the entry of the USSR into the League of Nations. Still later, the Paris Georgians worked unwittingly with the British double-agent Harold 'Kim' Philby to recruit Georgians who could be infiltrated into Soviet Georgia, but the Soviets had been informed, and the agents were shot just after crossing the border from Turkey.

The Menshevik leaders Zhordania and Tsereteli fell out with each other. Tsereteli remained a dedicated socialist internationalist, with an anti-Soviet, anti-communist position, but abhorred the adjustment to more nationalist positions by his fellow Georgians. He was deeply affected by his former comrade Chkheidze's suicide in 1926, and after the Second World War he moved to the United States to write his memoirs. Zhordania wrote anti-communist tracts, edited several Georgian-language journals, and published his memoirs before he died in 1953, less than two months before the death of Stalin. The last years of those who had introduced Marxism into Georgia half a century earlier were ones of isolation and impoverishment. But the most impressive testimony to their earlier successes and the massive popularity they had enjoyed in their homeland was the fact that they could not be dislodged from Georgia except by a militarily superior force from outside.

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The General Jewish Workers' Bund

JACK JACOBS

The Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Rusland un Poyln (the General Jewish Workers' Bund in Russia and Poland),¹ widely known as the Bund, which grew to be a major movement first in tsarist Russia and later in the Second Polish Republic, had its roots in the circles of Jewish workers and intellectuals active in the 1880s and 1890s in Vilna (now Vilnius), Minsk, Kovno (now Kaunas), and elsewhere. The adherents of these circles, which operated underground and were initially focused primarily on creating groups devoted to studying revolutionary literature, ultimately turned to an emphasis on agitation.² The local organizations created in a handful of cities and towns in the Pale of Settlement (Map 6.1) in the wake of this shift both supported and were supported by waves of strikes by Jewish workers in, among others, the textile, cigarette, bristle-making, and tanning industries – many of which succeeded, at least temporarily, in obtaining higher wages and shorter working hours. The industries in which Jewish socialists engaged in organizing in the 1890s included fields in which a high proportion of those employed were female. Buoyed by victories in specific strikes, Jewish social democrats became determined to create a unified organization.

The Bund in the Tsarist Empire

The Bund was formally established at a conference held in Vilna in the autumn of 1897 and attended not only by activists based in the host city but also by

1 The organization added 'Lite' (Lithuania) to its name in 1901, and was formally known throughout the remaining years of the tsarist era as the Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland: Kh. Sh. Kazdan, 'Der "bund" – biz dem finftn tsuzamenfor', in G. Aronson et al. (eds.), *Di geshikhte fun bund*, 1 (New York: Farlag unser tsait, 1960), p. 176.

2 E. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).



Map 6.1 The Pale of Settlement, 1905

individuals working in Warsaw, Minsk, Belostok (now Białystok), and Vitebsk. The first Central Committee of the Bund was made up of three men: Arkady Kremer, Vladimir Kossovsky, and Abraham Mutnikovich, all of whom had been active in Vilna in the period leading up to the creation of the Bund.

Ten months after the Bund's establishment, however, all three members of the Central Committee were arrested. Tellingly, two working-class women, Marya Zhadlusky, a seamstress who was among those who had participated in the Bund's founding meeting, and Tsvia Hurvitch, a glove-maker, were among those who stepped up to take leadership roles at that time. The positions taken by Zhadlusky and Hurvitch underscore the fact that women played significant roles in the early history of the Bund, and were particularly involved in distributing the movement's literature and in work conducted in the Bund's illegal printing shops.

The Bund, committed to Marxist ideas, played a major role in organizing the founding congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Rossiiskaia Sotsial'demokraticeskaja Rabochaia Partii, RSDRP) in Minsk in 1898. At that congress, the Bund demanded, and was acknowledged to have, full autonomy in the new party. However, the Bund disagreed strongly with key notions supported by those associated with the periodical *Iskra* (*The Spark*) at the RSDRP's second party congress, in 1903. Vladimir Lenin, speaking for *Iskra*, proposed a highly centralized party structure. The Bund, on the other hand, insisted at the time of the second congress not only that it should be recognized as a federated part of the RSDRP but also that it should be the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat in the party, and that it should be unrestricted in the regional reach of its organizing. The Bund's positions on crucial matters were rejected by a majority of the delegates to the congress.³ This led the Bund to sever its relationship with the RSDRP.⁴

Though the Bund's leaders had strong ideological misgivings about terrorism and acts of violence directed against individual government officials, a rank-and-file Bundist, Hirsh Lekert, became a folk-hero when he fired a pistol at the governor of Vilna, Viktor von Wahl, in 1902. Von Wahl had ordered that workers who had been arrested at a May Day demonstration be whipped. Lekert's action was interpreted by many as a symbol of Bundist insistence that working people be treated with dignity and accorded respect.

In the first years of the twentieth century, the Bund gained attention by organizing self-defence groups, which confronted pogromists intent on

3 H. J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia: From Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 76–80, 206–20.

4 The Bund had testy relations not only with the RSDRP but also, at some points, with the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) – though it had better relations with the latter than with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). J. Jacobs, *On Socialists and 'the Jewish Question' after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), p. 205.

engaging in violent actions directed at Jews and Jewish-owned property.⁵ In Gomel, in 1903, a Bundist-organized self-defence group was notably successful in battling pogromists to a standstill. Incidents like the one in Gomel increased the prestige of the Bund, and help to explain why the party grew rapidly in size.

There were some components of the Bund's programme that remained essentially unchanged throughout the tsarist period. The Bund, for example, remained committed to a Marxist perspective at all points in this era. Similarly, the Bund was a non-Zionist movement throughout this period. To be sure, the Bund did not discuss Zionism at any of its first three congresses. However, as early as March of 1899 *Der yidisher arbeyter*, which was edited by Bundists, published an article by Chaim Zhitlovsky, 'Zionism or Socialism?', in which the author insisted that, 'Just as there can never be peace between the bourgeoisie and the worker, *so there can never be peace between socialism and Zionism.*' Zhitlovsky also noted that Palestine was already inhabited, that Palestine was not large enough to absorb the Jewish population of the world, and that Zionism served the interests of the bourgeoisie.⁶ Zhitlovsky, in addition, advocated the establishment of a worldwide body of Jewish workers and the eventual creation of schools and universities in which Yiddish would be the language of instruction. The latter points were controversial in Bundist ranks at that time, and probably explain why his article was accompanied by an editorial note indicating that Zhitlovsky's piece expressed the opinions of the author, not necessarily those of the editors.⁷ But whatever the reasons for the editorial note of 1899, by 1901 the Bund was formally committed to an anti-Zionist position. At its fourth congress, the Bund resolved that Zionism was a bourgeois reaction to antisemitism and a 'utopia, which cannot be actualized'. From the perspective of the Bund, at that time and in years to come, Zionist agitation hindered the development of class consciousness among Jewish workers.⁸

But if the Bund's sympathy for Marxism and its critique of Zionism were essentially unaltered in the period from 1897 to 1917, the same cannot be said about its position on national cultural autonomy. One of the most prominent

5 Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia*, pp. 221ff.

6 Zhitlovsky's article is both quoted and discussed in J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 272–4.

7 J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 112.

8 J. Jacobs, 'Bundist anti-Zionism in interwar Poland', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 33 (2005), pp. 239–57 at p. 240.

Bundist writers proclaimed that 'in the pioneer group' of the Bund 'there was no special interest in the national question'.⁹ The founders of the Bund did not initially demand that Russian Jewry be granted national rights. They believed that their task was to organize Jewish workers in precisely the same way that others were attempting to organize Polish or German or Russian workers. Indeed, when, at the Bund's third congress, in 1899, a prominent Bundist, John Mill, proposed that Jewish workers should demand not merely equal civil rights but also equal national rights, he was strongly opposed by others, who feared that such a demand could undermine workers' solidarity. Mill's proposal was rejected. However, the Bund's next congress, held in 1901, took a pointedly different stance. After extended discussion, the delegates proclaimed that 'A state such as Russia, which consists of a multitude of various types of nationalities, ought in the future to transform itself into a federation of nationalities with full national autonomy for each of them, independently of the territory on which each lives' and that 'the concept "nationality" is also to be used with regard to the Jewish people'.¹⁰ In 1901, the Bund declined to demand national autonomy for Jews, on the grounds that such a demand was premature. Several years later, however, the Bund formally and officially proclaimed its support for national cultural autonomy for Russian Jewry, and insisted that Jews be granted the right to use their own language when dealing with institutions of the state.

In defending its position on national cultural autonomy, the Bund made use of the works of Marxist theoreticians, including, above all, Karl Kautsky.¹¹ Bundists also made use of ideas derived from works by the Austromarxists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer.¹² But the fact that Kautsky and the Austromarxists were attentive to the national question does not explain why the Bund altered its stance.

The question of how and why the Bund underwent an ideological shift on the national question has been repeatedly debated. Koppel Pinson argued in a seminal article that 'the pressure exerted by the mass character of the "Bund's" activities and by its close identification with the Jewish masses of the Tsarist Pale' help to explain this phenomenon.¹³ This has become known

9 F. Kursky, *Gezamlte shriftn* (New York: Der veker, 1952), p. 105.

10 Kazdan, 'Der "bund" – biz dem finftn tsuzamenfor', p. 180.

11 Jacobs, *On Socialists and 'the Jewish Question' after Marx*, pp. 119, 126–33.

12 K. S. Pinson, 'Arkady Kremer, Vladimir Medem, and the ideology of the Jewish "Bund"', *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (1945), pp. 233–64 at p. 250; R. Gechtman, 'Conceptualizing national-cultural autonomy: from the Austro-Marxists to the Jewish Labor Bund', *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 4 (2005), pp. 17–49 at pp. 31, 34, 43.

13 Pinson, 'Arkady Kremer, Vladimir Medem, and the ideology of the Jewish "Bund"', p. 250.

as the 'primordial' argument. Jonathan Frankel has emphasized not pressure from below exerted by workers but rather political factors – the need of Bundist leaders to tack between Zionists, on the one hand, and Russian social democrats, on the other.¹⁴ A third explanation was propounded by Yoav Peled, who argued that sociological theory shed light on the matter at hand. Using both split labour market theory and the notion of internal colonialism, Peled contended that the evolution of Bundist ideas on the national question can best be understood as linked to the emergence of an 'ethno-class consciousness' among Jewish workers.¹⁵

At the highpoint of the Revolution of 1905, the Bund claimed to have 33,890 members and 274 local organizations.¹⁶ It was far larger than any other Jewish socialist party in tsarist Russia. The Zionist Socialist Workers' Party, which argued that Jews needed a territory of their own but which did not believe that that such a territory had to be in Palestine, claimed to have 27,000 members around 1906. The Jewish Socialist Workers' Party, which included among its leading figures individuals who were more sympathetic to the populist Party of Socialist Revolutionaries than to the RSDRP, was half the size of the Zionist Socialist Party. The Jewish Social Democratic Workers' Party Poalei-Zion, which advocated working towards the obtaining of Palestine as a Jewish territory, finally, had 16,000 members.¹⁷ However, to say that the Bund was the dominant player in the Jewish socialist sector is not to say that it was the most popular Jewish political tendency in the Russian Empire. The mainstream, non-socialist, Zionist movement clearly had many, many more adherents in Russia in 1905 than did the Bund.

Attempting to blunt the power of the revolutionary parties, the Czarist regime made a series of concessions during the Revolution of 1905. The Bund, alongside other parties, was allowed to establish legal periodicals, and was

14 Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, p. 257. Zionists critiqued the Bundist programme as insufficiently nationalistic. Zimmerman accepts part of Frankel's analysis. He also points out that the Polish Socialist Party argued that the Bundists were 'Jewish separatists' who did not resist Russification (Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, p. 91) and contends that the Bund's adoption of a national programme was an essentially political decision designed to answer the PPS while ensuring that Jews would be represented as a group in a future federal republic of nationalities (Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, p. 273).

15 Y. Peled, *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale: The Political Economy of Jewish Workers' Nationalism in Late Imperial Russia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

16 H. J. Tobias and Ch. E. Woodhouse. 'Political Reaction and Revolutionary Careers: The Jewish Bundists in Defeat, 1907–1910', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19 (1977), pp. 367–96 at p. 377.

17 See, on the membership and ideologies of the other Jewish socialist parties in the tsarist empire, Jacobs, *On Socialists and 'the Jewish Question' after Marx*, pp. 118–22.

also allowed to engage in trade union activity. But, beginning in 1906, the regime began to withdraw certain of these concessions, and to clamp down once again on revolutionaries of all stripes. With some compromises on both sides – among other matters the Bund dropped its earlier demand that it be recognized by the RSDRP as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat – the Bund re-entered the RSDRP in 1906. This move, however, by no means stopped the quashing of the revolutionary parties. The legal press of the Bund was forced to cease operation, and editors of Bundist periodicals were arrested. Many of the legal trade unions were dissolved.

In what has often been described as the period of reaction, between 1907 and 1910, a huge proportion of those who had been active in the Bund retreated in one way or another.¹⁸ Many Bundists emigrated to the United States or elsewhere. Others, while remaining in the Russian Empire, stepped back from active political work. In some cases, Bundists, finding political action too dangerous or simply impossible, devoted themselves more to cultural work than had been the case before or during the revolution. Not only the Bund but also the other Jewish socialist parties of the Russian Empire underwent very dramatic declines. Membership plummeted, as did the number of local organizations.¹⁹ The Bund, at its low point in this era, was a shadow of its former self. It had a total membership in the hundreds, not the thousands.

The First World War had an enormous impact on the Bund, for one thing because it became difficult for Bundists in the Polish-speaking lands which were occupied by Germany to stay closely in touch with the Bund organization in Russia. This ultimately precipitated the severing of the Polish Bund from the Russian Bund. The First World War also ultimately contributed to the conditions which led to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The Bund responded very enthusiastically to the overthrow of the tsar in February 1917.²⁰ Henryk Erlich, a prominent Bundist, became a leader of the Petrograd Soviet. Mark Liber and Raphael Abramovich played important roles in the Congress of Soviets in July 1917. The Bolshevik seizure of power in October of that year, on the other hand, was widely condemned by leading

18 Tobias and Woodhouse, 'Political Reaction and Revolutionary Careers', pp. 387–93.

19 V. Levin, 'The Jewish Socialist Parties in Russia in the Period of Reaction', in S. Hoffman and E. Mendelsohn (eds.), *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 111–27.

20 A. Gelbard, *Der jüdische Arbeiter-Bund Rußlands im Revolutionsjahr 1917* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1982).

Bundists. Erlich underscored that the Soviet government created after that seizure had 'no right to call itself a workers' government . . . [N]o right to speak in the name of the Russian working class.'²¹ Vladimir Medem, a major Bundist theorist, proclaimed that the Bolsheviks were able to stay in power 'only because their terror has destroyed and made powerless all of their opponents'.²² The Bundist press, which argued that the Bolshevik overthrow of the Provisional Revolutionary Government had been carried out by a small group of 'adventurers', bluntly stated 'We believe that the Bolshevik coup is insane.'²³

The Bund had initially been invigorated by the events of 1917. In December 1917, its membership reached 33,700.²⁴ But, like socialist parties around the world, the Bund subsequently split over its attitude towards the Bolsheviks.

At the Twelfth Conference of the Bund, held in April of 1920, a majority of the delegates voted in favour of the Bund entering the Russian Communist Party, as an autonomous organization. A minority, having lost on this crucial matter, immediately formed a new entity (the RSDRP-Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund (SD), known as the Social Democratic Bund). Rafail Abramovich was one of the leading figures in this grouping. A. Litvak, an important figure in the Bund, who was not actually present at the Twelfth Conference, was also among those chosen to serve on the Central Committee of this organization and played an active role in its affairs.²⁵ But the Social Democratic Bund was hounded by the government. Early in 1921, leaders of the Social Democratic Bund were arrested in many cities, and their organizations dissolved,²⁶ though individual Social Democratic Bundists succeeded in escaping abroad.²⁷ Members of the Social Democratic Bund are reported to have continued to meet in Russia in 1922, and issued an illegal bulletin in 1923,²⁸ but the organization appears to have been successfully repressed by the Soviet government within Russia from that point on.

21 Quoted in B. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility: The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland, 1917–1943* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 63–4.

22 Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility*, p. 65.

23 Z. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 94.

24 Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, p. 72.

25 Kh. Sh. Kazdan, 'Der lebns-veg fun A. Litvak. Kemfer, shriftsteler, lerer', in A. Litvak, *Geklibene shriftn* (New York: Farlag arbeter ring, 1945), pp. 116–17. Cf. Jack Jacobs, 'The Bund in Vilna, 1918–1939', *Polin* 25 (2013), pp. 268–9.

26 Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility*, p. 103.

27 A significant number of Social Democratic Bundists ended up in Vilna and helped to sustain a Social Democratic Bund in that city (Jacobs, 'The Bund in Vilna', pp. 271–2).

28 J. S. Hertz, 'Di tsveyte ruslander revolutsie (1917 un vaytere yorn)', in G. Aronson et al. (eds.), *Di geshikhte fun bund*, 111 (New York: Farlag unzer tsait, 1966), p. 237.

The grouping that came out of the majority at the Twelfth Conference became known as the Kombund. Some of those in the Kombund ultimately became active in the *Evseksiia*, the Jewish sections of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They, too, however, were not beyond suspicion in a later era. Esther Frumkin, who had sided with the majority at the Bund's Twelfth Conference, and who was, ultimately, one of the most visible figures in the *Evseksiia*, was arrested in 1938 and sentenced to eight years in a prison camp. She died while incarcerated. Rakhmiel Veinshtain, who, like Frumkin, had been a leading Bundist, and, who, like her, subsequently, closely identified with the *Evseksiia*, defended Frumkin after her arrest, was himself arrested immediately thereafter, and reportedly committed suicide in 1938. Even one-time Bundists who wholeheartedly aligned themselves with the Communist Party and remained activists, in other words, did not necessarily survive in the Soviet Union. But it should be noted that, figures like Frumkin and Veinshtain notwithstanding, many of those who had been active in the Bund in the period leading up to the Twelfth Conference apparently dropped out of political affairs rather than follow them into the Communist Party (and may well have kept themselves alive by keeping their heads down in subsequent years).

The Bund in Independent Poland: 1918–1939

The Bund was not able to continue to operate in the Soviet Union as an independent or autonomous entity after the Bolsheviks consolidated power. In Poland, on the other hand, the Bund ultimately thrived in the interwar era. However, there was a long period of internal disputes, particularly over the question of the Bund's international affiliations.

A majority of those on the Central Committee of the Polish Bund sought, in 1920, to have the Bund admitted to the Third International (the Comintern). The Comintern, however, demanded that all parties that desired to affiliate with it exclude from their parties anyone within their ranks who did not wholly agree with the Third International. This ultimately led a majority of the Central Committee of the Polish Bund to announce, in 1921, that it could not accept all the requirements for affiliation on which the Comintern continued to insist.

For years thereafter, the Bund found itself not only unable to affiliate with the Comintern, but also unwilling to associate with the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), which was founded in 1923 and included social democratic parties to the right of the Bund. The Bund's most significant international tie



Fig. 6.1 A Bundist May Day demonstration in Poland, 1930. (Photograph by Ullstein Bild/ Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

during the 1920s was with the International Information Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Parties (the Paris Bureau), which occupied a narrow political space between the Comintern and the LSI. Henryk Erlich, one of the most visible leaders of the Polish Bund, served as a Bundist representative to the Bureau.²⁹ By 1930, however, the Bund had concluded that the Information Bureau had failed, and it chose to join the LSI after all.³⁰

The Bund's relationship to the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS), the most important socialist party in independent Poland, shifted over time.³¹ In the 1920s, the PPS was manifestly further to the right in political terms than was the Bund. The Polish party was

29 J. S. Hertz, 'Der bund in umophengikn poyln, 1926–1932', in G. Aronson et al. (eds.), *Di geshikhte fun bund*, v (New York: Farlag unzer tsait, 1966), p. 54.

30 Johnpoll, *Politics of Futility*, pp. 184–9; A. Brumberg, 'The Bund: History of a Schism', in J. Jacobs (ed.), *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 81–9; M. Kessler, 'The Bund and the Labour and Socialist International', *ibid.*, pp. 183–94.

31 A. Brumberg, 'The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in the Late 1930s', in Y. Gutman et al. (eds.), *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989), pp. 75–94; P. Wróbel, 'From Conflict to Cooperation: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party, 1897–1939', in Jacobs (ed.), *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, pp. 155–71.

sympathetic to social democratic ideas, not to revolutionary socialism. The PPS was also far more nationalistic than was the Bund, and was initially not open to the Bund's call for national cultural autonomy for Polish Jewry. The Bund could not in good conscience endorse co-operation between the PPS and non-working-class political parties to the right of the Polish socialists, such as the Peasant Party. In principle, however, the Bund was committed to emulating in independent Poland a situation something like that which had existed within the RSDRP in the years leading up to the First World War. In 1928, the Bund proclaimed that:

The working class of each nationality needs its own organization, but not its own party. In a land composed of several nationalities, there should be only one Socialist party, with as many autonomous organizations within it as there are nationalities in the state . . . [but] [t]he party of the Polish proletariat is not yet ready to break the bounds of nationalism to become a state party rather than a national-Polish party; to become instead of [the] Polish Socialist Party, the Socialist Party of Poland.³²

However, by the late 1930s, the PPS and the Bund had moved closer to one another than had earlier been the case. In 1937, the PPS formally endorsed cultural autonomy for Polish Jewry and Poland's other national minorities. The PPS also actively supported the Bund's struggle against antisemitism at that point in time. To be sure, there were antisemitic voices within the PPS (even) in the latter half of the 1930s. However, the Bund and the PPS co-operated on many fronts in those years far more than they had in earlier eras.

The Bund did not do well in those countrywide elections in Poland in the 1920s or early 1930s in which it participated. Indeed, though the Bundist slate attracted roughly 100,000 votes in the parliamentary elections held in 1928,³³ the Bund never succeeded in electing any of its candidates to the Sejm, the

32 Quoted in A. Polonsky, 'The Bund in Polish Political Life, 1935–1939', in A. Rapoport-Albert and S. J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London: Halban, 1988), pp. 553–4.

33 The official Polish election statistics for 1928 give us the voting tallies only of those parties that succeeded in winning seats in the Sejm in that year. There were 10,703,000 votes received in total by those parties. This figure does not include votes received by parties, such as the Bund, that failed to receive enough votes to elect candidates to the Sejm (Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility*, p. 156). Jews made up 10.5 per cent of the population of Poland according to the census of 1921. The proportion of Jews in the population fell in subsequent years. Thus, it is altogether unsurprising that a number of the blocs and parties that attracted non-Jewish Polish voters received substantially more votes in 1928 (and every other year in which there was a country-wide election) than did any of the Jewish parties.

Polish parliament. Zionist and orthodox Jewish rivals to the Bund, on the other hand, did in fact have candidates elected to the Polish parliament at various points throughout this era.

But if the Bund was unable to win in parliamentary elections, it performed extremely, and increasingly, well, in the latter half of the 1930s, in elections to both municipal councils and the governing bodies of the *kehiles* – the organized Jewish communities – in a number of major Polish cities with large Jewish populations. In Warsaw, for example, which was home to the largest Jewish community in Poland, the Bundist list attracted more votes in the *kehile* elections of 1936 than any other list. The Bund won fifteen of the fifty seats.³⁴ Moreover, Bundist lists did even better in the *kehile* elections of 1936 in cities such as Grodno, Lublin, and Piotrków than they had in Warsaw.

Similarly, the Bundist list won a significant victory in 1936 in the municipal council elections in Łódź, which had the second-largest Jewish community in Poland. Indeed, the proportion of votes for Jewish lists won by the Bundist-dominated slate in the municipal elections in Łódź was higher than the proportion which had been obtained by the Bundist list in Warsaw's *kehile* election.

The most significant examples of Bundist electoral victories occurred in 1938 and 1939. In Warsaw, the Bundist-led list won 61.7 per cent of the votes cast for Jewish lists in the municipal elections of 1938. Seventeen of the candidates on the Bundist-led list (of whom sixteen were members of the Bund) were elected. The PPS, in turn, elected twenty-seven of its members to the city council of Warsaw in that year. In Łódź, seventeen Jewish city council members were elected to the municipal council in 1938. Eleven of these seventeen council members were on the Bundist-led electoral list. Eight of the eleven were members of the Bund.³⁵ Moreover, the PPS succeeded in electing thirty-three of its candidates to the municipal council of Łódź. Thus, in both of Poland's largest cities, the local elections of 1938 resulted in socialist majorities in the city councils. All told, Bundist lists won major victories in five of the seven largest Jewish communities in Poland.

The Bund had never been as strong in Galicia as it had been in some other portions of interwar Poland. In 1939, however, Bundists made inroads even in

34 Polonsky, 'The Bund in Polish Political Life, 1935–1939', p. 562. Aguda, a party that attracted Orthodox Jews, won ten seats. A Zionist list won nine.

35 Two of those elected on the Bund-led slate were members of the Poale Zion Left. Another of those elected on this slate was a communist (M. Trębacz, "'Our power is not the number of seats': the Bund's representatives in the Łódź City Council, 1919–1939", *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 10* (2011), pp. 185–206 at p. 188.

Galicia, and the Bund increased its representation in the city council of Tarnów, where it received 58 per cent of the votes cast for Jewish parties in that year's election.³⁶

Both the reasons for the electoral successes of the Bund and the deeper significance of results obtained by Bundist lists in the late 1930s have been disputed. Johnpoll, in a work published in 1967, seems to suggest that current events, including the rise of Hitler, the Moscow trials, and an increase in antisemitism within Poland, led a substantial number of Polish Jewish voters to vote for the Bund.³⁷ Mendelsohn pointed to the perception among Polish Jews that the Bund played a significant role in countering antisemitism, to the sense that the Bund, unlike other Jewish parties, had a major ally on the Polish street (that is, the PPS), and, perhaps most significantly, to widespread disillusionment with Zionism, which had not succeeded in its goals, as key matters helping to explain the increased attraction of the Bund.³⁸ Blatman underscored not so much events within or outside Poland, or the failures of other movements, but rather a purported ideological reorientation within the Bund in explaining why the Bund attracted a substantially greater number of voters in the late 1930s than it had earlier in the interwar era.³⁹ Pickhan, on the other hand, put particular stress on changes in the socio-economic composition of Polish Jewry. She pointed to an increase in the numbers of Jewish wage workers in interwar Poland, the resulting growth in Jewish trade unions linked to the Bund, and the strong, positive impact that this phenomenon had on the strength of the Bund itself.⁴⁰ Polonsky, finally, has argued that the fortunes of the parties competing for Polish Jewish voters were subject to 'violent swings of mood'. Thus, in his opinion, though the Bund did well in particular locations in elections in the late 1930s, the hopes that Jews had placed in the Bund 'could very quickly have changed' if these hopes were not rapidly fulfilled.⁴¹

Pickhan's explanation is a compelling one. The Bundist-led trade union movement, which had approximately 50,000 members at the beginning of the

36 A. Wiercholska, 'Relations between the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party from a micro-historical perspective: Tarnów in the interwar period', *East European Jewish Affairs* 43, 3 (2013), pp. 297–313 at p. 306.

37 Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility*, p. 195.

38 E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 78; E. Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 77.

39 D. Blatman, 'The Bund in Poland, 1935–1939', *Polin* 9 (1996), pp. 58–82 at p. 59.

40 G. Pickhan, 'Gegen den Strom'. *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund 'Bund' in Polen, 1918–1939* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001), p. 206.

41 Polonsky, 'The Bund in Polish political life, 1935–1939', p. 572.

interwar period, had about 99,000 members in 1939.⁴² The members of these unions acted as a reservoir of support for the party. But there may well be supplementary factors that help to explain how and why the Bund ultimately increased its relative strength. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Bund fostered a constellation of organizations and movements around the nucleus of the party. Certain of these ancillary movements – devoted to children, youth, physical education, and cultural activities – were notably successful, and acted as feeder groups for the Bund.

The most significant example of this phenomenon was the Youth Bund Tsukunft (Future), the Bundist-oriented youth movement. The Tsukunft, which had approximately 3,000 members in 1924, had about 5,000 members in 1925, nearly 10,000 in 1930, and over 12,000 in 1939. Large numbers of one-time members of the Tsukunft joined the Bund as they aged out of the youth movement, and, in specific instances, came to play leading roles in the party.⁴³ Morgnshtern (Morning Star), a Bundist-affiliated movement devoted to physical education, had a similar trajectory.⁴⁴

The Bund in Poland also did well in the cultural and educational spheres. Bundists served as leaders of the Central Organization of Jewish Schools (Tsentrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsie, TSYSHO), which had a secularist orientation and organized schools providing instruction in Yiddish, primarily to school-aged children. TSYSHO was founded in Poland in 1921 (initially with the participation not only of Bundists but also of activists from other left-wing Jewish parties). At the end of the 1920s, 'there were 46 kindergartens, 114 elementary schools, 52 evening schools, three gymnasias, and one seminar for the training of teachers affiliated with it – altogether, 216 educational institutions in a hundred communities, serving 24 000 pupils'.⁴⁵ The Medem Sanatorium (named after Vladimir Medem), an institution which served children at risk of contracting tuberculosis which was a part of the

42 S. M. Zygelbojm, 'Di profesionele bavegung fun di yidishe arbeter', in S. Dubnow-Erlich (ed.), *Di geshikhte fun bund*, IV (New York: Farlag unzer tsait, 1972), pp. 179–219 at pp. 211, 212.

43 J. Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), pp. 8–28, 98–9.

44 Ibid., pp. 48–61, 98. Cf. R. Gechtman, 'Socialist mass politics through sport: the Bund's Morgnshtern in Poland, 1926–1939', *Journal of Sport History* 26, 2, (1999), pp. 326–51.

45 N. Cohen, 'The Bund's contribution to Yiddish culture in Poland between the two world wars', in Jacobs (ed.), *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, pp. 90–111. To be sure, TSYSHO declined in size thereafter. However, it played a role in extending the reach of the Bund throughout the 1930s. See Y. Nishimura, 'On the cultural front: the Bund and the Yiddish secular school movement in interwar Poland', *East European Jewish Affairs* 43, 3 (2013), pp. 265–81.

TSYSHO network and which was firmly controlled by Bundists, was widely admired even by individuals who strongly disagreed with its socialist and secularist orientation. Though it was not a large entity – there were 225 children at the sanatorium in the winter of 1939 – the Medem Sanatorium's excellent reputation reflected positively not merely on TSYSHO but on the Bund itself.⁴⁶

It has been argued that the Bund, the claims of its partisans notwithstanding, did not play the leading role in the development of Yiddish culture in the tsarist empire.⁴⁷ Whatever may have been the case in Russia, there is little question that the Bund was a key supporter of secular Yiddish culture in interwar Poland, and among its important defenders and promoters. The Bund took control of the Culture League (Kultur Lige), which was based in Warsaw but had the legal right to open affiliates across the country. Libraries were created under its auspices in many cities and towns – there were over 1,000 such libraries – and the organization also established so-called 'people's universities'. Moreover, Bundists sponsored successful Yiddish-language drama circles, choruses, and other cultural institutions.⁴⁸

But not all the Bund's ancillary movements were equally successful. The fact that the Bundist women's organization, Jewish Worker Woman (Yidisher Arbeter Froy, YAF), which was founded in the mid-1920s, remained small throughout the years of its existence reveals changes in the roles played by Bundist women, and the limits of the Bund itself. Women played less significant roles in the Polish Bund than they had in the Russian Bund. Sara Szweber was a prominent female member of the Bund's Central Committee in the interwar years. She was, however, often the only woman in the Bund's countrywide leadership. There were women – such as Bela Szapiro in Lublin, Anna Rosenthal in Vilna, Roza Eichner in Łódź, and Rifke Antman in Belostok – who played leading roles in local Bundist organizations. There were, however, not very many such women. Moreover, the proportion of rank-and-file Bundists who were female was apparently far smaller in independent Poland than it had been in the tsarist era. YAF had a total of 616

46 Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture*, pp. 62–81. Cf. M. Kozłowska, "'In sunshine and joy'? The story of Medem Sanatorium in Miedzeszyn', *East European Politics and Societies* 27, 1 (2013), pp. 49–62.

47 D. E. Fishman, 'The Bund and modern Yiddish culture', in Z. Gitelman (ed.), *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), pp. 107–19.

48 M. V. Bernshtayn, 'Der "bund" in poyln', in Sh. Federbush (ed.), *Yorbukh alef* (New York: s.n., 1964), p. 203.

members in 1929. There were stormy debates among the Bundists as to why YAF remained small, and why there were so few women in the Bund's leadership. A prominent (male) Bundist alleged that Jewish working women had become more assimilated than had Jewish working men and were, as a result, not particularly interested in Jewish affairs. Female Bundists responded that because males did not manifest great faith in the abilities of women, Jewish working women had inculcated feelings of inferiority (and, they suggested, had, as a result, become less willing to put themselves forward for important positions in the party). Since women made up half of the Jewish working class, the Polish Bund's failure to attract many Jewish women into its ranks suggested that there were hard limits as to how large or powerful the party could become.⁴⁹

The Bund during and after the Second World War

The German invasion of Poland from the west, which began at the beginning of September 1939, and the Soviet invasion of Poland from the east, which began a couple of weeks after the start of the German invasion, put an end to the Bund's heyday. Several days after the German military invaded Poland, the Polish government decided to retreat from Warsaw.⁵⁰ The members of the Bund's Central Committee, following the government's lead, also ultimately decided to leave the city, and, in most cases, headed east. Thus, in the wake of the Red Army's invasion of eastern Poland, some of the Bund's leaders found themselves in Soviet-occupied territory. A number of members of the Bund ultimately died while in Soviet hands. Yoysef Aronowicz, Anna Rozental, Yoysef Tejtcl, and Yankl Żeleźników, all of whom were prominent members of the Bund and all of whom were arrested in Vilna by agents of the Soviet government, did not survive incarceration. Victor Alter was executed by the Soviet regime. Henryk Erlich, who, alongside Alter,

49 D. Blatman, 'Women in the Jewish Labor Bund in Interwar Poland', in D. Ofer and L. J. Weitzman (eds.), *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 68–84; G. Pickhan, "'Wo sind die Frauen?' Zur Diskussion um Weiblichkeit, Männlichkeit und Jüdischkeit im Allgemeinen Jüdischen Arbeiterbund ("Bund") in Polen', in J. Gehmacher (ed.), *Zwischen den Kriegen. Nationen, Nationalismen und Geschlechterverhältnisse in Mittel- und Osteuropa, 1918–1939* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2004), pp. 187–99; Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture*, pp. 88–96. Cf. M. Kozłowska, 'Briders un Shvester? Women in the Tsukunft youth movement in interwar Poland', *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* 13 (2015), pp. 113–19.

50 The single best book on the Bund in the era of the Second World War is D. Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland, 1939–1949*, trans. N. Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003).

was one of the key leaders of the Polish Bund, committed suicide while in a Soviet prison.

A small number of Bundists succeeded in escaping both the Nazis and the Soviets, and found refuge in New York, London, Shanghai, and Palestine, among other places. The Bundists in New York, who formed an organized body, engaged in sustained relief and rescue efforts throughout the Second World War. The Bund also had official representatives on the London-based Polish National Council: first, Shmul Zygielbojm, who served until the spring of 1943, at which point he committed suicide in a desperate attempt to get the world to pay attention to the extermination of European Jewry, and, later, Emanuel Szerer, who served on the National Council following Zygielbojm's death. Bundists in Poland during the years of the Holocaust, and individuals who had been members of the Tsukunft or of other movements on the periphery of the Bund in the pre-Holocaust era, were actively involved in anti-Nazi resistance movements. Jews associated with several different political parties engaged in armed resistance. However, the Bundist legacy of self-defence groups may have predisposed Bundists to undertake armed resistance during the Second World War to a greater extent than was true in some other, more traditional, components of the Jewish community. Marek Edelman, who had been a member, before the Holocaust, first of the Bundist children's movement and later of the Bundist youth movement, was among the commanders of the Jewish Fighting Organization during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. Bundists also were active in armed resistance elsewhere in Poland. However, the overwhelming bulk of rank-and-file members of the Bund who remained in Nazi-occupied territory, whether directly involved with the resistance or not, were murdered or died during the course of the war.

In the wake of the Holocaust, Bundists attempted to reorganize.⁵¹ Bundists who had survived in Poland, alongside Bundists who had survived in the USSR or elsewhere and returned to Poland, recreated Bundist institutions in several Polish cities. In mid-1947, a leader of the Bund in Poland reported that there had been 35 local organizations, with a total of 1,800 members, represented at a recently concluded Poland-wide conference of the Bund, and that this represented a dip from a marginally earlier post-war peak of 2,200 members.⁵² The Bund's history in post-war Poland,

⁵¹ The only comprehensive study of the post-Holocaust Bund is D. Slucki, *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945: Toward a Global History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

however, was very short-lived. Under pressure from the Soviet-dominated Polish United Workers' Party, the Bund was forced to liquidate itself at the beginning of 1949. Many of the Bundists and Tsukunftists in Poland at that time subsequently emigrated. Some others remained in Poland but withdrew from political affairs.

Bundists in other countries also attempted to revive their movement. The first worldwide conference of the Bund, held in May 1947, attracted representatives from eighteen countries and created, for the first time in the history of the Bund, a World Coordinating Committee. In subsequent decades, Bundists living in the United States, France, Australia, Canada, Israel, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, and other lands sponsored publishing firms, issued Bundist periodicals, conducted radio broadcasts, created summer camps for children, and engaged in political and/or cultural activities. The local organizations of the Bund in the decades following the Second World War, however, were made up primarily of immigrants and survivors in most of the countries in which they operated. With a modest number of exceptions, they were unsuccessful in attracting younger generations, and, in most instances, ground to a halt as their members died off.

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Some scholars have assessed the Bund very negatively. Gitelman attributes the 'disappearance from consciousness and even memory, both individual and collective, of this once powerful movement' to four factors.⁵³ First and foremost, Gitelman points out, (correctly) 'the Bund was murdered . . . almost all its European members fell victim to the Nazis'. According to Gitelman, however, 'the Nazis and the Soviets . . . destroyed not only the Bundists but also the appeal of the Bund's ideology . . .'. Secondly, Gitelman (without distinguishing between socialism and Communism) claims that the Bundist belief that socialism would solve the 'Jewish problem' was discredited, above all by the failure of 'the states that called themselves socialist, most notably the Soviet Union . . .'. Gitelman further argues that the third reason for the 'disappearance' of the Bund was changes in the socio-economic make-up of Jewish communities. In the Bund's heyday, a large segment of the Jewish community in eastern Europe and elsewhere was made up of workers. That, to be sure, is no longer the case in some major, contemporary, Jewish communities, such as that of the United

53 Z. Gitelman, 'A Century of Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Legacy of the Bund and the Zionist Movement', in Gitelman (ed.), *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics*, p. 8. All further quotes in this and the following paragraph are from this chapter, pp. 8–9.

States. Finally, the appeal of the Bund decreased because the Bund, Gitelman asserts, made 'Yiddish and its culture the basis of Jewish ethnicity'. Rapid linguistic assimilation in the post-Holocaust world, Gitelman suggests, made the position of the Bund far less relevant and compelling. This, he contends, was 'perhaps the fourth and most fatal flaw of Bundism'.

The points made by Gitelman are serious and worthy of closer examination. They are not, on the other hand, all equally valid, nor do they exhaust the factors that help to explain the manifest decline of the Bund. One factor to which Gitelman does not devote sustained attention (though he alludes to related matters) is the intense animosity of institutions of the State of Israel, in their formative years, to the Bund and Bundism. If it was true, as Gitelman pointed out in 2003, that 'if one were to ask Israeli or American Jews under the age of sixty to identify the Bund, probably over 90 percent would be unable to do so', it was also true that this historical amnesia may well have been due, in Israel, to ideologically motivated efforts (in the 1950s and the decades immediately thereafter) to avoid teaching the children of Israel about the Bund. Gitelman asserts that 'Even in academia, after a brief flurry of scholarly interest in the Bund in the 1960s, few scholars in Israel, the United States, or eastern Europe have paid it any attention.' However, academic interest in the Bund, in the United States, in Europe, and elsewhere, is currently not quite as limited as it was when Gitelman wrote his work. In recent years, a new generation of scholars interested in the Bund has emerged. This revival of academic interest, finally, may well be linked to political phenomena. In the United States, for one, the current generation does not universally think of socialism as discredited. Socialism, though not, to be sure, Soviet communism, has apparently not lost its appeal among young Jews in the United States and elsewhere to the degree that Gitelman's wording may suggest. Similarly, some contemporary Jews have become disenchanted with Zionism in recent years. The Bund per se hardly exists. But Bundist ideas continue to resonate in some circles.

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SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ROUTES
IN AUSTRALIA, THE AMERICAS,
AND ASIA

7

The Australian Labor Party

FRANK BONGIORNO AND SEAN SCALMER

Australia is among the few places in the world with a Labor Party.¹ Such parties belong to a family of parties committed to ‘socialism’ and ‘social democracy’ that mainly emerged in Europe from the 1860s. Labour parties may be distinguished from other ‘socialist’ and ‘social democratic’ parties in two respects. They are founded by unions; they also maintain a place for them within their structure, including their policymaking and candidate selection. Australia’s Labor Party was precocious, developing just after the formation of those in Scandinavia in the 1880s (for the social democratic parties of Sweden and Norway were also labour parties in this sense), and before that of Britain (1900).²

Australia owed its British colonization to convict transportation, which ended in eastern Australia in 1853. By 1859, there were five self-governing colonies – New South Wales (NSW), Tasmania, South Australia (SA), Queensland, and Victoria – each with a bicameral parliament. Western Australia (WA), which received convicts between 1850 and 1868, became self-governing in 1890. After the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, these colonies became states of a federation, each retaining a parliament, but with certain powers transferred to the federal sphere, based in the temporary capital of Melbourne, in Victoria. Canberra, located in an Australian Capital Territory (ACT) carved from southern NSW,

¹ The American spelling became increasingly common in the early twentieth century and has long been the official spelling.

² D. W. Rawson, ‘The life-span of labour parties’, *Political Studies* 17, 3 (1969), pp. 313–33.

became the seat of government and parliament in 1927. The Northern Territory was governed by South Australia from 1862, later by the Commonwealth (1911), and given a measure of self-government in 1978. The ACT followed suit in 1989.

By 1891, four colonies had a Labor Party. Independent socialist organizations have existed since the 1880s and, while some have held aloof from Labor, others have seen it as a vehicle for their ambitions. No socialist organization has been able for long to ignore the Labor Party's status as a working-class party, but its contribution to socialism has been much contested.

Below, we argue that the history of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is best conceptualized as having four phases. In a first, experimental phase, Labor challenged bourgeois politics, introducing new procedures and organizational forms. Labor demonstrated their potential by winning elections, advancing limited but substantial reform, and evincing a willingness to push further. The First World War checked Labor's forward march, initiating a second epoch. The party's novel procedures failed to deal with tensions generated by the war. In the war's aftermath, the party formulated an overt commitment to socialism but demonstrated less capacity to win elections or introduce meaningful or lasting reform. Its recovery was only evident from the Second World War. In its third phase, the party led the war effort and drew on practical wartime experience and Keynesian ideas to renovate its policies and appeals. Though it spent much of the post-war period out of office, its 1940s reforms set the political context for the next quarter of a century. In the early 1970s it returned to government, advancing equal access to public services and widening its ambitions to address inequalities of gender and race. A fourth phase of the party's history begins from the later 1970s. Labor maintained a wider view of inequality – encompassing class, race, gender, and sexuality – but responded to economic crisis with neoliberalism. It won unprecedented electoral success but provoked disillusionment. From the mid-1990s, while it did better than its opponents at the subnational level, its federal electoral success evaporated, its capacity for renewal was increasingly questioned, and its connection to socialism was tenuous.

The Labour Experiment: Origins to the First World War

In its first outing in 1891, a Labor Party (Labor Electoral League) won nearly a quarter of the seats in the lower house of the NSW parliament. It made

a less spectacular but still conspicuous entry soon afterward in Victoria, Queensland, and SA. Growing support allowed Labor to form a minority government in Queensland (1899), and nationally (1904). The party achieved half the vote in a national election in 1910, forming the first majority labour or socialist government in the world. At this time, even the mighty social democrats of Germany attracted little more than one in three electors, and had no chance under the German constitution of forming a government. Why did the Australians enjoy such early success?

Structural explanations provide clues, for by 1910 employers and the self-employed made up barely 15 per cent of those undertaking work.³ Large enterprises were becoming more common, cities more divided by class. There was also a large working class in the countryside, famously found among the shearers of the wool industry and the Australian Workers Union. But Australia was not unique in these ways. Its distinguishing features lay rather in politics and organization.

White working-class men enjoyed significant political and industrial privileges. From the 1850s, most had the right to vote and stand for office in the lower chambers of colonial parliaments. By the end of the 1880s, payment of parliamentarians had also become the rule. Workers had relative freedom to assemble and organize. By 1890, unions represented probably one in five workers in the major colonies, encompassing not just labour aristocrats, but miners, shearers, labourers, and factory workers, including some women.⁴ These unions had established central trades halls and labour councils, and they met from time to time in intercolonial gatherings. There was a tradition of trade-union lobbying and protest, and even occasional sponsorship of 'labour' candidates. In 1884, an Intercolonial Congress declared the necessity of 'direct parliamentary representation'.⁵ Especially from the mid-1880s, a radical subculture shared socialist, single tax, and anarchist ideas, competing with a still dominant liberalism.

Enthusiasm for a working-class party was sharpened by industrial defeat and economic collapse. Employers re-established their pre-eminence in lockouts and strikes during the early and middle 1890s. State repression of workers

3 J. Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), pp. 312–13, drawing on figures for NSW and Victoria.

4 R. Gollan, *Radical and Working-Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850–1910* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian National University, 1960), pp. 132–3.

5 Cited in N. Dyrenfurth and F. Bongiorno, *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2011), p. 25.

encouraged the defeated to try to win control of the state. Meanwhile, an economic crisis saw banks crash, unemployment explode, and wages fall by a third. Liberal governments appeared helpless or hard-hearted in the face of the depression. A heightened class consciousness mobilized workers.

The new party's challenge was most evident in its practice of politics and conception of representation. Typically, policy was formed at a 'conference' or 'convention', where delegates from local leagues met with affiliated unions' representatives. Parliamentarians were 'pledged' to implement the agreed platform, and to follow the collective determinations of a 'caucus'. This constituted a 'labour theory of democracy', through which the Labor member was to be transformed from the representative of a constituency to that of a class.⁶

Many parliamentarians chafed against such restrictions: the attempt to impose the pledge led to the defection of more than one generation of Labor leaders. It also contributed to the coalescence of liberal and conservative politicians into a single anti-Labor bloc. Progressive liberals might share many common views on public policy with their Labor counterparts, but few could countenance Labor's sacrifice of individual judgement to the dictates of collective responsibility. Such views were overlaid by religious affiliation. Catholics, often but not always working-class, tended to support Labor. Protestants also supported Labor, but opponents characterized 'caucus rule' and 'machine politics' as a violation of conscience, akin to the practices of the Church of Rome. Some would condemn Labor for its popishness as much as its socialism.⁷

So unconventional in practice, the new organization did not initially commit itself to a radical break from liberal policy. The 'Rules and Platform' agreed by the first Labor Party in NSW avoided the term 'socialism', rather declaring commitment to 'democratic' and 'progressive' legislation. The first object was to 'secure for the wealth-producers' legislation that would 'advance their interests'. The following sixteen items were a laundry list of practical matters, encompassing electoral reform, education, working conditions, industrial law, political reorganization (elective magistracies, decentralization, federation of the colonies), and land taxation, the latter partly resulting from the influence of Henry George, who visited in 1890. The racial basis of Labor's appeal was there in item fifteen: 'Stamping of Chinese-made furniture'. The expectation that

6 V. G. Childe, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia* (London: Labour Publishing Co., 1923).

7 J. Brett, 'Class, religion and the foundation of the Australian party system: a revisionist interpretation', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 37, 1 (2002), pp. 39–56.

workers might expand their demands was expressed in the final item: 'Any measure that will secure for the wage-earner a fair and equitable return for his or her labour.'⁸ Labor activists elsewhere shared the impulses evident in NSW, though they were sometimes more explicit in their dedication to the 'exclusion' of 'Asiatic', 'coloured', and 'coolie' labourers.⁹ Racism ran deep.

So did sexism. Labor formally supported women's suffrage but there was sometimes hesitation, with Labor men being afraid that women's enfranchisement might undermine the party. There was a widespread view among Labor men that women would vote conservative. Labor feared the entry of women into a workforce with high unemployment and undergoing rapid technological change. When Labor men supported equal pay, it was often in the hope that this would discourage employers from hiring women. Women did join the party, and the party sometimes paid a women's organizer, but such arrangements tended to be haphazard and support from men sometimes grudging. Committees were formed to represent women within the party, formulate policies on 'women's issues' such as those relating to children and the home, and mobilize the women's vote. Labor men were generally hostile to separate women's organizations within the party, and they ensured that women's committees remained subordinate when they permitted them to exist at all. In some states, even after women won the vote (as they had by 1909), the law did not allow them to stand for parliament for many years. No woman won Labor endorsement to run for parliament until during the First World War, and none would win a seat until the middle of the following decade.¹⁰

With the establishment of a national parliament in 1901, Labor gained a new arena of political action. The party's inaugural fighting platform reflected the limited powers delegated to the Commonwealth sphere, but also confirmed the apparent modesty of its ambitions: adult suffrage (women had been enfranchised only in SA and WA); 'total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races'; amendment of the constitution (so as to allow for citizen-initiated referendums, and for a referendum in the event of conflict between the Houses); and old age pensions.¹¹ The sticking point was what

8 'Rules and Platform of the Labour Electoral Platform of NSW', *Australian Workman*, 11 April 1891.

9 'The New Labour Platform', *Maryborough Chronicle*, 23 August 1892; 'Progressive Political League', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 30 January 1892.

10 F. Bongiorno, *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996), ch. 5.

11 'The Federal Labour Platform', *Worker* (Brisbane), 16 March 1901.

contemporaries called the 'fiscal issue': free trade versus protection. Labor dealt with these divisions by allowing its federal members a free vote on the issue.

None of these concerns suggested any dramatic departure from Australian political traditions. From the 1870s, radical liberal ministries had embraced the state to protect local industry, develop the economy, provide infrastructure, and even redistribute wealth. They also sought constitutional reform, including the referendum.¹² At the turn of the century, a French visitor, Albert Métin, described Australasians as practitioners of 'le socialisme sans doctrines'.¹³ By the early years of the century, Australian liberal governments had extended state control into the labour market, with wages boards and compulsory arbitration. In a notable judgment of 1907, the President of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, H. B. Higgins, promulgated a 'living wage' as a new minimum: an amount sufficient for a (male) worker to support a wife and three children in 'frugal comfort'. This became an abiding norm, underpinning what has been called a 'wage earners' welfare state'.¹⁴ The labour movement largely supported these arrangements, seeking merely to extend their advantages to workers.

As a British settler colony, 'race' defined the political order established by Europeans. Australia was founded on the seizure of land from Indigenous people and the imposition of British sovereignty. Australians led a transnational project to advance white male democracy. The first major legislation of the national parliament was a racially discriminatory Immigration Restriction Act (1901); a Pacific Islands Labourers' Act (1901) passed soon afterward facilitated the deportation of thousands of Pacific islanders working in the Queensland sugar industry.¹⁵ Labor was distinguishable only by the intensity with which its racist positions were held. In 1905, Labor clarified the objectives of the party in the federal sphere, committing itself to 'The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity'.¹⁶ Labor presented itself as the more reliable defender of White

12 S. Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2020).

13 A. Métin, *Socialism without Doctrine* (Chippendale: Alternative Publishing Cooperative, 1977 [1901]).

14 F. G. Castles, *The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand, 1890–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin in association with Port Nicholson Press, 1985).

15 M. Lake and H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

16 'Federal. (As Adopted at the Commonwealth Labour Conference, Melbourne, July 1905.)', *Worker* (Brisbane), 29 July 1905.

Australia, its enemies as inclined to sacrifice such purity and to undermine 'white' working conditions.

Laborites drew on socialist ideas to justify expanded state intervention. Several of the party's pioneering leaders in NSW graduated through the Australian Socialist League, formed in 1887. An expanding network of labour and radical newspapers (more than eighty were established in the decade from 1888) further shared socialist ideas, while a habit of assembly out-of-doors provided opportunities for oratory.¹⁷ Laborites absorbed the radical and socialist texts of the day from Britain and the United States especially, though they did not themselves draft works of theoretical breadth or originality. But they edited newspapers, drafted fictions and verse, composed pamphlets and memoirs, and sought to advance the cause of socialism in public debates. Several bodies – most notably a Victorian Socialist Party in Melbourne led by British émigré socialist Tom Mann – sought a fuller conversion. But the necessity to calm anxious voters led most Laborites to present the doctrine in the most moderate form: socialism was 'being mates';¹⁸ socialism was the ethic of the 'lowly Nazarene'; 'socialism' was the use of 'government' for 'the protection of the weak'.¹⁹ When socialist members of the Labor Party sought to extend its platform in 1905, they managed only to signal a broad commitment to enlarged state action: 'The securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State and Municipality.'²⁰ Defending the new objective in public debate, leaders explicitly distanced themselves from the more ambitious: 'So far as that is Socialism, so far are we Socialists . . . If Socialism means more than that . . . we have nothing to do with it.'²¹

The Fisher Labor Government, elected in 1910, offered the first decisive test. It created a state bank; used receipts from progressive taxation to extend old age pensions and establish disability pensions and maternity allowances paid directly to mothers; legislated a land tax; granted preference in public service employment to unionists; and improved the system of compulsory arbitration. The party was also nationalistic and fearful of Japan. It expanded

17 T. Irving and S. Scalmer, 'Labour intellectuals in Australia: modes, traditions, generations, transformations', *International Review of Social History* 50, 1 (2005), pp. 1–26.

18 J. Miller [William Lane], *Workingman's Paradise: An Australian Labour Novel* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1980 [1892]).

19 J. C. Watson cited in Dyrenfurth, 'Vote down', p. 78.

20 Australian Labor Party, *Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, 1905* (Brisbane: Australian Labor Party, 1905), p. 10.

21 W. Holman, cited in 'Reid–Holman Debate', *Leader* (Orange), 16 April 1906.

the Royal Australian Navy and introduced compulsory military training. Its grander ambitions were embodied in two referendum votes intended to secure wider powers for the government in commerce, and to give effect to Labor's objective of nationalizing monopolies. These were defeated in 1911 and 1913. The Fisher Government fell in 1913, too. Had labour's forward march halted?

A Forward March Halted? 1914–1941

When war came in August 1914, a federal election was in progress, the narrow result of the 1913 contest having led to an early poll. As Opposition leader, Fisher declared that if the worst should happen, Australia would 'stand beside our own' – Great Britain – 'to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling'. But he soon offered a more qualified commitment, explaining that patriotism meant providing for Australia's own defence first and 'if there was anything to spare, offer it as a tribute to the mother country'. His eye was on Japan, Britain's ally, but many feared that country as an opportunistic regional competitor and even a future enemy. These worries would intensify during the war, especially in the mind of Fisher's successor, William Morris (Billy) Hughes.²²

Labor won easily, gaining control of both houses of parliament as in 1910. Being nationalist and pro-empire, unlike its European left-wing counterparts the ALP did not split over the war itself. Opposition to the war in the early months was confined to the far left, which was mainly outside the ALP, and Labor formed a ministry committed to mobilizing the nation for war and protecting working-class living standards. These goals proved to be mutually incompatible as the economy shrank, prices rose, wages declined, and unemployment grew. Union unrest increased and the movement's leaders began to seek stronger control over Labor governments.²³

Electorally, Labor's forward march was not interrupted. There were successes in the states, with Labor in 1915 forming a majority government in Queensland for the first time under the barrister T. J. Ryan. After his departure for federal politics in 1919, the premiership passed to former union leader E. G. Theodore. Queensland's proved to be the most creative Labor government in the era, experimenting with state enterprise – there were even government butcher shops and a state hotel – and the victory inaugurated

22 N. Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), pp. 217–18, 234–6.

23 I. Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900–1921* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1965), pp. 93–6.

a long period of Labor domination in the northern state. It became the first government in Australia to abolish capital punishment as well as its upper house, both in the early 1920s.²⁴

At the national level, Labor found itself divided over conscription. An ailing Fisher resigned in October 1915 in favour of Hughes, who soon abandoned a party commitment to hold a referendum to allow the federal government to control prices. After visiting Britain and the Western Front in the first half of 1916, Hughes returned and announced that Australia should have conscription. But with most of the union movement and his own party opposed, Hughes lacked sufficient support to gain parliamentary approval. So, he turned to the expedient of a plebiscite. Although this course gained caucus and cabinet endorsement after lengthy debate, the matter was deeply contentious. The 'no' vote narrowly won in October 1916, and the Labor Party split into an anti-conscriptionist majority and conscriptionist minority everywhere except Queensland, where the anti-conscriptionist Ryan Labor government held firm. Hughes soon joined with his political opponents to form a pro-conscriptionist government, with Labor slipping into opposition; much the same happened in NSW, where the Premier William Holman played the role of 'Labor rat'. A further vote on conscription in December 1917 also led to its rejection.

The split reflected deep divisions over nation and empire, war and liberty, and between labour's political and industrial wings. It also exposed flaws in labour's theory of democracy. The dynamics were explored most fully and intelligently by a young graduate of Sydney and Oxford, who also spent time as an adviser to an NSW Labor premier in the early 1920s. Vere Gordon Childe would become one of the most influential archaeologists of the twentieth century. His first book, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia* (1923), should be considered a contribution to international debates about the road to socialism and to the sociology of mass parties (the most obvious comparator is the more celebrated work of Robert Michels). Childe concluded his study with the much-quoted remark that Labor, 'starting with a band of inspired Socialists, degenerated into a vast machine for capturing political power, but did not know how to use that power when attained except for the profit of individuals'. While recognizing the novelty of labour's theory of democracy, Childe was alive to its failure to work in practice.²⁵

24 D. J. Murphy, 'The establishment of state enterprises in Queensland 1915–1918', *Labour History* 14 (1968), pp. 13–22.

25 Childe, *How Labour Governs*, p. 209; T. Irving, *The Fatal Lure of Politics: The Life and Thought of Vere Gordon Childe* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2020), pp. 170, 233.

Between 1916 and 1928, Labor failed at five federal elections. Federally and in several states, it faced not only an urban-based Nationalist Party, but a new rural-based Country Party that won the allegiance of many voters. Labor did better in the states than nationally but, except in Queensland, governments were short-lived. They often suffered intense factional conflict, in which rival unions and their parliamentary allies struggled for power. These conflicts were at their most intense in NSW, where an auctioneer with authoritarian and populist tendencies, Jack Lang, led a short-lived, reformist but turbulent Labor government (1925–7). Pressure from capitalist interests, at home and abroad, was also a critical constraint. In Queensland, Theodore's government was subjected to a loan blockade, organized by British-based pastoral interests after the government had increased rents. This ordeal helped to convert an adventurous Labor government, bent on industrializing the state and reducing class inequality, into a more compliant and conservative one.²⁶

It was at state level that the first woman was elected to parliament for the party: May Holman, to the Legislative Assembly of WA in 1925. The seat had previously been held by her father. Women were making their mark on the party's thought and policy, even when they were unable to break through to a parliamentary seat. Among the best-known activists and intellectuals was Muriel Heagney, the daughter of a senior Victorian Labor official, who worked as an industrial researcher, union organizer, and Labor Party office-holder while campaigning for equal pay and maternity allowances.²⁷

The split had created a more Catholic party; where Catholics were less than a quarter of the population, after the 1920 NSW election, won by Labor, twenty-five out of forty-three Labor Party elected members were of that religion.²⁸ This partly reflected the waging of the conscription struggle: the most prominent Catholic archbishop in Australia, Daniel Mannix of Melbourne, had opposed conscription, whose proponents denounced their antagonists as Sinn Féin. In the split's aftermath, many Catholics regarded non-Labor parties as unwelcoming. But the intertwining of Labor and Catholicism was paradoxical, since the party had moved towards the left, at least in its formal professions. The syndicalist impulse, represented by the One Big Union movement (1918–24), provided some momentum, as did the

26 T. Cochrane, *Blockade: The Queensland Loans Affair 1920 to 1924* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989).

27 M. Reynolds, *The Last Bastion: Labor Women Working towards Equality in the Parliaments of Australia* (Sydney: Business & Professional Publishing, 1995), pp. 28–9, 34–6.

28 J. Hagan and K. Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1891–1991* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991), p. 118.

formation of the Communist Party of Australia (1920). Although the party that gained the imprimatur of Moscow remained small for many years, some members occupied union leadership positions. Responding to these trends, in 1921 at its conference in Brisbane, the ALP adopted as its objective 'the socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange', though its radicalism was tempered by a subsequent resolution, which promised not to 'abolish private ownership' where this was used 'in a socially useful manner' and 'without exploitation'.²⁹

Labor was in office federally, and in most states, over the years of the Great Depression. None of these governments contemplated socialization or survived long. The federal government of James Scullin (1929–32) ran into a problem of national solvency as overseas loans dried up and commodity prices crashed. The government did not control the Senate, so its capacity to pursue even mildly adventurous measures – such as a banknote issue proposed by the federal treasurer and former Queensland premier, Theodore – was greatly constrained. A second Lang Government in NSW, elected in October 1930, advocated a more radical policy: suspension of interest payments on Australia's overseas – mainly British – loans. Meanwhile, members of the Labor right plotted with business leaders and conservative politicians; several defected, forming a new United Australia Party. The Scullin Government was brought down by attacks from left and right and crashed to defeat at an election in December 1931.

Labor policy survived a little longer within the NSW government. But, responding to its increasingly radical tenor, the NSW governor, Sir Philip Game, dismissed the Lang Government in May 1932. Labor lost the subsequent election. While three of the less populous states had Labor governments during the 1930s, conservatives dominated elsewhere. The prime minister (1932–1939) was the former Labor premier of Tasmania, federal minister and Labor 'rat', Joseph Lyons.

Labor's revival began in the mid-1930s with the replacement in 1935 of Scullin by John Curtin, a more dynamic WA politician formerly from Melbourne. Once a radical socialist as well as an anti-conscriptionist, Curtin successfully cultivated party unity.³⁰ At the 1940 election Labor's vote recovered sufficiently to reduce an anti-Labor coalition to minority status. When two independents switched allegiance in October 1941, Curtin became prime minister. Labor had been in office for just a few weeks when Japan

29 Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, pp. 224–5.

30 D. Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 344–53.

attacked Pearl Harbor, followed by the fall of Singapore, and the bombing of parts of northern Australia in February 1942.

Renovation: 1941–1975

The coming of a new Labor government also coincided with the early stirrings in Australia of the Keynesian revolution. Curtin had adopted a virtual self-denying ordinance regarding socialist measures. Nonetheless, there was an expansion of the welfare state in the form of new social security payments, such as widows' pensions and unemployment, sickness, and funeral benefits. The government also gained control over income tax via a High Court judgement, enhancing its capacity to implement Labor's platform even as it remained hampered by the constitution in health, civil aviation, and banking. Ambitious proposals for an expansion of Commonwealth powers for post-war reconstruction failed at a 1944 referendum. Ingeniously, the government used the defence power to support its leading role in the Snowy Mountains Scheme, a massive project to generate hydro-electricity and irrigation. A Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement of 1945 resulted in federal support for the construction of public housing, and a White Paper on Full Employment released in the same year signalled the government's commitment to a Keynesianism that helped to reinvigorate, as it redefined, Labor's socialism. But its attempt to nationalize the banks in 1947 ran aground on the rocks of the High Court and the Privy Council.³¹

Labor won a landslide victory at the 1943 election, which also saw the first two women join the federal parliament. For the conservatives in the House of Representatives, there was Enid Lyons, widow of the former prime minister. But in the Senate, Labor's Dorothy Tangney, a Western Australian, gained election. While she would hold her seat until 1968, Tangney was the last woman to gain election for the party federally until 1974. Labor's record in the states was hardly any better, and overall it had less success than its main conservative rival, the Liberal Party, in sending women into parliament. Women were also more likely to vote for the conservative parties in this era, and Labor's culture remained masculinist in a way that seemed archaic by the 1960s.

Despite many achievements, including a further victory at the 1946 election, the Labor government's popularity declined. Ben Chifley, a former train

31 S. Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015).

driver and astute financial manager as wartime treasurer, became prime minister after Curtin's death in 1945. But the non-Labor forces also regrouped, with the formation of the modern Liberal Party under the leadership of former prime minister Robert Menzies. Menzies exploited hostility to Labor's effort to nationalize the banks, and mobilized public opposition to what he presented as socialist regimentation. The Chifley Government's use of the army to help break a coal miners' strike in 1949, while alienating some working-class voters, won it little kudos among staunch anti-communists. The reintroduction of petrol rationing in 1949 seemed to some voters, weary of wartime restrictions, yet another example of Labor's addiction to regulation.³²

The Liberal and Country parties won a landslide victory at the December 1949 elections. What followed was a period of twenty-three years of Liberal–Country Party rule. In state politics, Labor did somewhat better overall (although not in every state), and in NSW a pragmatic Labor government would rule from 1941 to 1965. State Labor governments of this kind emphasized 'development' – both rural and industrial – and favoured incremental reform of labour conditions in areas such as working hours, wage determination, workers' compensation, and paid leave. In Tasmania, the power and longevity of Labor in government was closely connected with the role of the Hydro-Electric Commission, on which the island state's ambitions for industrial development were seen to depend. The existence in all states of massive government enterprises had led to use of the term 'state socialism', but their continuation had bipartisan support, including among those who claimed to be anti-socialist.³³

Wherever Labor governed after the war, it did so with moderation, an approach that unions could find frustrating. Electors often blamed Labor governments for the resulting industrial turbulence. In 1957, in Queensland, unions were prepared to confront the Labor government of Vince Gair in pursuit of an extra week of annual leave. The government refused to budge, resulting in a party split and the government's destruction.³⁴ By this time, however, Labor had already descended into crisis across the nation.

The origins of the crisis lay in the relationship of Catholicism and communism within the labour movement. During the early 1940s, a Catholic lay

32 D. Lee, 'The 1949 federal election: a reinterpretation', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 29, 3 (1994), pp. 501–19.

33 F. W. Eggleston, *State Socialism in Victoria* (London: P. S. King, 1932).

34 B. Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's loser', in Denis Murphy et al. (eds.), *The Premiers of Queensland* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2003), pp. 278–81.

organization called the Catholic Social Studies Movement (later just called 'The Movement') had evolved largely in secret under the leadership of a young lawyer, Bob Santamaria. The organization devoted itself to promoting Catholic social policy and fighting communism, especially in the unions; it had the support (including financial backing) of the ageing archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. In 1945, in response to the growing power of communists in many trade unions, the ALP authorized the formation of industrial groups that would take the fight to the communists. 'Movement' members provided much, although not all, of the force behind these industrial groups, which enjoyed several successes in union elections in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Since affiliated unions shaped Labor pre-selection and policy, the Movement therefore won a growing potential to influence the party.

Herbert Vere Evatt, a brilliant but erratic former High Court judge, had become federal Labor leader after Chifley's death in 1951. He angered conservative Catholics in the Labor Party by his opposition to the Menzies' Government's unsuccessful effort to ban the Communist Party. While Evatt courted Santamaria for a time, after Labor's defeat in the 1954 election he publicly turned against the Movement. Evatt's attack unleashed a powerful wave of in-fighting, some of it fuelled by religious sectarianism. The result was a split in the Labor Party, and the formation of a breakaway Democratic Labor Party (DLP). It weakened Labor everywhere and helped keep the party out of office federally until 1972, in Victoria until 1982, and in Queensland until 1989.³⁵

Even after Evatt's retirement from politics, problems lingered. Evatt's successor – Arthur Calwell, an old-style Victorian Catholic who had remained within the party in 1955 – went close to victory in 1961 during a brief recession but then led a campaign against Australia's participation in the Vietnam War and against conscription. He went down to inglorious defeats in 1963 and 1966.

Calwell was succeeded by Gough Whitlam, a middle-class, urbane, university-educated lawyer (Figure 7.1). He should be seen as an Australian counterpart of the modernizing progressive liberal or social democratic leaders of the 1960s and 1970s: Harold Wilson in Britain, Willy Brandt in West Germany, and Pierre Trudeau in Canada. Alongside a rising South Australian Labor politician of rare talent and another middle-class lawyer, Don Dunstan,

35 B. Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001).



Fig. 7.1 Labor Party leader Gough Whitlam broadened Labor's appeal in the 1960s and 1970s, connecting with younger voters and with women. He is pictured with pop singer 'Little Pattie' (Patricia Thompson), as part of Labor's successful campaign for office in 1972. (Photograph by Graeme Fletcher/Keystone/Getty Images.)

a future premier of that state, Whitlam had worked to persuade the party to drop its support for the White Australia Policy in 1965. In 1967, having replaced Calwell as leader, Whitlam then proceeded to lead a process of organizational and policy renewal that would help to change the party and the nation.

Whitlam looked especially to improve the quality of life in the burgeoning outer suburbs and regional towns. He developed a wide range of progressive policies in fields ranging from health and education through to the environment, the arts, and the rights of women, migrants, and Indigenous people. Whitlam declared that the constitution need not be a barrier to most Labor policies, for a Labor government could rely on a provision, section 96, that gave federal governments the power to provide grants to the states for virtually any purpose. Socialism was increasingly defined as equal access to government services and public goods, rather than as government ownership. Whitlam also

looked to reform the Labor Party itself: introducing new internal procedures to renovate the platform, enhancing the position of the parliamentary leadership within the party's structures, and restructuring a Victorian branch that many blamed for the party's poor electoral performances in that state.³⁶

Labor achieved a massive electoral swing in 1969 and won a general election in December 1972. Whitlam then proceeded to implement his party's policies, often at a cracking pace that provoked opposition from conservative parties unused to being out of office yet still in control of the powerful Senate. It was a sign of the changing nature of the party that one of its first actions was in support of the achievement of equal pay for women. Guided by Whitlam's women's adviser, Elizabeth Reid, many of its policies, such as support for childcare, the abolition of a sales tax on contraceptives, and free university education, were intended to expand women's social and economic opportunities. There were no women in the Parliamentary Labor Party when it was elected in 1972, but they won several seats at the elections of 1974 and 1975.

Whitlam overcame obstruction by calling a double dissolution election in 1974, which he won narrowly, and which allowed him under the constitution to call a joint sitting of both houses of parliament to break the deadlock over rejected legislation. This was how Labor was able to introduce a system of national health insurance, Medibank. Yet, even without control of the Senate, Labor's legislative record was remarkable, including the Trade Practices Act (1974), the Family Law Act (1975), and the Racial Discrimination Act (1975), alongside a more generous welfare state, land handbacks to Aboriginal people, and expanded educational funding and opportunity from pre-school through to university.

The Whitlam Government arguably represented the outer limits of a renovated democratic socialism in Australia.³⁷ Unfortunately, its particular version of Labor socialism was founded on an assumption of the continuing prosperity of the long post-war boom. In line with much 'revisionist' socialist thought that emerged internationally in the post-war boom, Whitlam imagined that his government could blunt opposition to its radicalism by raising standards for everyone; rising prosperity – and tax receipts – would pay for generous social policy. But with the oil crisis and the emergence of stagflation in 1974, the conditions that had produced Whitlam's Labor

36 G. Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977).

37 S. Macintyre, 'The short history of social democracy in Australia', *Thesis Eleven* 15 (1986), pp. 3–14.

dissolved. The government's spending and wages policies were ill-equipped to deal with inflation. Meanwhile, its introduction of tariff cuts to counter inflation and support for higher wages worsened unemployment.³⁸

As in 1930, Australia's place in the international economy imposed a limit of the possible on a Labor government. A gathering sense of economic crisis and declining confidence in the government – the latter not helped by some very ill-advised loan-raising activities by two government ministers – weakened its standing. In October, the Opposition used its numbers in the Senate to defer the budget, thereby raising the spectre of the government running out of funds. A political stand-off ensued, with Whitlam refusing to call an election, and Malcolm Fraser, the Liberal Party leader, also unwilling to budge. On 11 November 1975, the governor-general used his reserve powers to dismiss the government and appoint Fraser caretaker prime minister until an election could be held. There were large, angry, and occasionally violent protests, and some strikes, though no general strike. At the election of 13 December, the Coalition defeated Labor in a landslide.

Renewal or Exhaustion? The 1970s to the Present

Most Labor supporters were traumatized by the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. Some were also clear-eyed about its administrative failures. Scarcely six months after Whitlam's defeat, NSW Labor returned to power under the leadership of another university-trained lawyer, Neville Wran. The 'Wran model' preserved a commitment to social reform – such as countering gender and sexual discrimination, environmental protection, and promoting the arts – but foregrounded fiscal discipline and cautious compromise: 'sound, stable, responsible' government.³⁹ The approach influenced Laborites interstate and in federal politics. And leaders of the parliamentary party also found willing partners among the officials of Australian trade unions: fearful of growing joblessness; conscious that wage rises tended to be eroded by inflation; anxious to demonstrate a constructive as well as a defensive capacity.

The two arms of the labour movement agreed to a Prices and Incomes Accord in February 1983. Framed as a 'radical new approach' to 'economic crisis', it committed unions to forgo possible wage rises in exchange for improvements to the 'social wage' of welfare, health, and education. More

38 P. A. McGavin, *Wages and Whitlam: The Wages Policy of the Whitlam Government* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987).

39 Wran cited in T. Bramston, 'A Model Leader Who Never Got to Perform on a Larger Stage', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May 2006.

ambitiously, the Accord also envisaged attempts to restrain prices and non-wage incomes, and to initiate a system of tripartite consultation at industry and national levels.⁴⁰ The formal details of the partnership were reinforced by changes in leadership. Robert J. (Bob) Hawke had served as an Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) advocate and then as its president. Oxford-educated, he was also variously celebrated and tolerated for feats of beer-drinking and womanizing. Over the 1970s, he won considerable personal popularity as both a forceful champion of employees and a fixer of industrial disputes. Hawke entered federal parliament at the 1980 election, won the party leadership in February 1983, and took the party back to power only a month later. His first major act was to convene a National Economic Summit, opening the national parliament to representatives from Australian employers, unions, major interest groups, and the three levels of government. Its purpose, Hawke told delegates, was to find new ways to 'work constructively together' and to tailor their 'expectations' to the 'capacities of the economy'.⁴¹

Hawke and his treasurer and successor Paul Keating led Labor to five consecutive electoral victories. Their governments were marked by substantial social and industrial reform: the reintroduction of a comprehensive public health system (Medicare); increased welfare payments (especially for low-income families); greater (if still insufficient) provision for childcare; and the Sex Discrimination Act (1984). In Indigenous affairs, Labor failed to deliver on its promise of national land rights or a treaty but promoted 'reconciliation'; it responded to decisions of the High Court that recognized Aboriginal land rights, or 'native title', under specific, restricted circumstances. In foreign affairs, the government sought to advance nuclear disarmament and trade liberalization; Hawke was personally active in efforts to isolate apartheid South Africa and to protect Antarctica from mining. Domestically, Labor also took action to preserve the natural environment. And on the elevation of Keating to the prime ministership in December 1991, the government adopted a more adventurous symbolic politics. Keating sought to remake Australia as an independent republic. He more fully acknowledged the wrongs done to Indigenous people. He also promoted a fuller engagement with Asia, a message that reflected and strengthened Australian multiculturalism.

40 'Statement of Accord', available at <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22library/partypol/992745%22>.

41 R. J. Hawke, Address to the National Economic Summit Conference, 11 April 1983, available at <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/original/00006083.pdf>.

Labor's economic policies were most controversial. Though the original Accord document decried the influence of 'conservative economic theories', the Labor government was in fact distinguished by its rapid implementation of neoliberal policies, then more commonly called 'economic rationalism'. Under Hawke and Keating, Labor floated the dollar, privatized government enterprises (among them the Commonwealth Bank and the national airline, Qantas), deregulated the financial sector, and lessened tariff protection. It broadened the tax system, but reduced the redistributive capacities of personal income tax scales. It cut company tax. It renegotiated the Accord in an effort to ensure continued wage restraint and repressed those unions that refused to honour those agreements. It reduced the power of the Arbitration Commission to set employment conditions and enhanced the role of workplace bargaining to heighten productivity. It increased welfare payments but targeted these more narrowly. It expanded the provision of higher education, but it extracted part of the cost from university students through the introduction of a system of government-based, low-interest loans repayable through the tax system. The distributional outcome of these policies was growing inequality. Between 1982 and 1994, the incomes of the top 10 per cent of earners increased by \$100 per week in real terms. The bottom 10 per cent, beneficiaries of Labor's welfare spending, gained a more modest increase of \$11 a week. For the 80 per cent in between, Labor's long period of government brought with it decline.⁴²

'Socialism' was only rarely referenced in debates over these policies; the more elastic concept of a 'Labor tradition' organized discussion. Critics depicted contemporary Labor as a 'betrayal' of that tradition and a 'hijack' of the party.⁴³ Supporters rejected these attacks, emphasizing the intensity of the economic crisis and the party's successes in nurturing employment growth and social protection. They insisted that Hawke and Keating had maintained fidelity to Labor's 'ideals' and had merely altered the 'means' used to achieve them.⁴⁴ Keating could be dismissive of earlier Labor leaders (Curtin was a 'trier' and Chifley a 'plodder'),⁴⁵ but nonetheless invoked tradition in his description of the party's 1993 election victory as 'one for

42 S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 253.

43 G. Maddox, *The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989); D. Jaensch, *The Hawke-Keating Hijack* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

44 N. Wran, 'The Great Tradition: Labor Reform from Curtin to Hawke', John Curtin Memorial Lecture, 1986, available at <http://john.curtin.edu.au/jcmemlect/wran1986.html>; P. Kelly, 'People's PM, But No Party Pin-up', *Australian*, 5 March 2003.

45 Keating cited in Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment*, p. 477.

the true believers, the people who in difficult times have kept the faith'.⁴⁶ If the contemporary ALP anticipated Tony Blair's 'Third Way' by a decade or more, then its new departures were less proudly affirmed. A claimed continuity of purpose was used to justify policy experiment.

The federal ALP's unprecedented run of electoral success ended in 1996, leaving behind perplexing challenges, still unresolved. Labor's restructuring bequeathed a leaner economy, in which the public sector and manufacturing played a reduced role, and unions' willingness to assist in wage restraint did little to limit hostility to unionism among parts of business and conservative parties. A new conservative government passed strongly anti-union legislation and made a greater bid to represent workers in the skilled trades and small business (typically termed 'battlers' or 'aspirationals'). Union density fell from over half the workforce in the later 1970s to barely one in four in 2000 and little more than one in eight in 2016. Party identification declined, as did the attraction of Labor to blue-collar voters.⁴⁷ The Accord partners were weakened by the very changes they initiated.

Labor had been energized since the 1960s by its attempts to break away from traditional emphases on race and nation, and to broaden its appeals to the professional middle class. Migrant communities and women supported the party in greater numbers. In 1994, the party's national conference passed a resolution that required the pre-selection of women candidates in at least 35 per cent of winnable seats by 2002. In 1996, following the American organization of the same name, EMILY's List (Early Money Is Like Yeast) was established to support women candidates. The results of these initiatives have been stark: after the 2019 election, women comprised 47 per cent of federal Labor members; the figure for the conservative Coalition was just 23 per cent.⁴⁸ Since the first in 1989, the ACT's Rosemary Follett, there have been several female Labor state or territory premiers or chief ministers and one Labor prime minister, Julia Gillard. But changes in personnel and policy alienated some of Labor's supporters. Critics alleged a subordination of class issues to 'identity politics' and warned of 'gentrification'.⁴⁹ Electoral strategists

46 P. J. Keating, Victory Speech, 13 March 1993, available at www.keating.org.au/shop/item/victory-speech-true-believers-13-march-1993.

47 M. Goot and I. Watson, 'Explaining Howard's success: social structure, issue agendas and party support, 1993–2004', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42, 2 (2007), pp. 253–76.

48 J. Norman, 'Women Still Underrepresented in Parliament after 2019 Federal Election', ABC, 27 May 2019, www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-27/women-still-underrepresented-in-parliament/11148020.

49 M. Thompson, *Labor without Class: The Gentrification of the ALP* (Annandale: Pluto Press in association with the Lloyd Ross Forum, Labour Council of New South Wales, 1999).

worried over how Labor might bridge its traditional and newer constituencies, a task complicated by the emergence of new parties: One Nation, winning support from older and less educated voters, hostile to immigration and Aboriginal rights; and the Greens, attracting younger, progressive, educated, urban voters.

Labor's 'theory of democracy' offered a blunt tool to meet these challenges. The battle to win 'the numbers' had long typified internal Labor politics, but was now increasingly divorced from matters of belief or policy. Internal debate was limited. Declining union membership made those affiliated to the Labor Party less representative of the workforce. Some argued that their structural centrality was no longer justified. Party membership declined. Those who remained had little capacity to influence the decisions of leaders.

The ALP continued to win state elections, reflecting the judgement of the majority of voters that it would deliver public services more fairly than its opponents. But it regained federal office under a new leader, Kevin Rudd, only in November 2007, scrambling back to power in a minority government in 2010 under Julia Gillard, and then limping to defeat (under Rudd again) three years later. The ALP's time in office confirmed and intensified its challenges. The government did win several reforms. It offered an apology to the 'Stolen Generations', Indigenous people ripped from their families; it met the global economic crisis with a stimulus that protected many; it extended the welfare state with a new disability insurance scheme and higher payments for the age pension. It elected its first woman as federal leader, Gillard, who also became Australia's first female prime minister. But it had won an election on only a limited programme and altered its policies on key matters of public concern: climate change; refugees; taxation of mining profits. It also changed leaders on two occasions – elevating Gillard to replace Rudd, then reinstalling Rudd. This magnified the old criticism that Labor had become a mere 'machine' for holding power and profiting individuals. But the machine itself was ramshackle, and now less obviously a party of labour.

Viewed historically, the party was in crisis: uncertain of its purpose or philosophy and weakened by structural challenges it had failed to meet. But viewed comparatively, it was in a less perilous position than many equivalent social democratic and labour parties, for Australia's electoral system provided protection. Compulsory voting ensured even alienated citizens lodged a ballot. A form of preferential voting (through which the disaffected could lodge a preference for another party and a second preference for Labor), helped to keep it as one of two parties capable of forming a government.

The party persisted. But the meaning of labour-in-politics was now unclear. Its relationship to socialism was distant, now even barely rhetorical. And it enjoyed little success in presenting itself as an alternative government in an era when neoliberalism had fallen, but nothing had yet quite emerged to take its place.

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Social Democracy in Argentina

LUCAS POY

Origins and Consolidation: 1882–1912

On the winter morning of Sunday, 28 June 1896, over fifty delegates gathered in the main hall of a building owned by a German socialist association in downtown Buenos Aires. On the stage were 'the red flags of trade unions and political groups; on the side walls, banners with the names of the big men of socialism'. Dozens of militants and sympathizers, among them a few women, occupied the galleries that surrounded the space reserved for the delegates, all of whom were men. After appointing a provisional committee, which approved some formalities and read a series of telegrams from the interior provinces, the delegates approved the reports of the auditing committee and started discussing the draft statutes and programme of a new organization. On the evening of the following day, after cheerfully singing Filippo Turati's *Inno dei lavoratori*, the delegates closed the congress that had officially constituted the Socialist Party of Argentina (hereafter, PS).¹

The story had started earlier. A handful of French *communards* had created the first socialist groups in the 1870s, and some years later exiled members of the German SPD established the first permanent organization, called *Verein Vorwärts*. Through its agitation and propaganda, the group insisted on highlighting the class antagonism that arose because of capitalist development and struggled to spread socialist ideas among local workers. In the last years of the 1880s, under the leadership of a mining engineer, Germán Avé-Lallemant (1835–1910), these German socialists found a bigger audience, started publishing a newspaper in Spanish, and recruited new followers.²

¹ *La Vanguardia*, 4 July 1896.

² J. Ratzer, *Los marxistas argentinos del 90* (Córdoba: Pasado y Presente, 1970); S. Carreras, H. Tarcus, and J. Zeller, *Los socialistas alemanes y la formación del movimiento obrero argentino. Antología del Vorwärts, 1886–1901* (Buenos Aires: Buenos Libros/IAIPK/Cedinci, 2008); L. Poy and D. Gaido, 'Under German eyes: Germán Avé-Lallemant and the origins of Marxism in Argentina', *Science & Society* 75, 4 (2011), pp. 480–505.

After a brief period of crisis, new socialist groups emerged and made progress between 1894 and 1896, and the founding congress of 1896 brought them together in a single organization.

The decisive feature of this process of centralization was the role played by Juan Bautista Justo (1865–1928), a prominent physician who turned to political activity in the early 1890s and exhibited a remarkable ability to give political and theoretical guidance to Argentine socialists. The editorial article of the first issue of *La Vanguardia*, which would become the main organ of the party, in April 1894, was a good summary of Justo's ideas. Its famous opening sentence, 'This country is transforming', summed up the starting point of the argument: Argentina was changing because it was part of an international process of capitalist development. According to Justo, this was a positive trend, as long as the differentiation of classes and the struggle between them was a factor of progress and development.

Moreover, he included an ethnic component, emphasizing that this economic transformation had promoted the arrival of one and a half million Europeans, 'who, together with the already existing element of European origin', constituted the 'active part of the population' and would be able to absorb 'little by little the old *criollo* element, incapable of marching on its own towards a higher social type'. Justo lamented, however, that the 'incompetence and rapacity' of the local bourgeoisie, unqualified to develop 'clear and positive ideas on the social question', impeded the country's road to progress. Things would change only with the intervention of the working class, which would have a progressive effect on the country's society and politics. More than anything, the role of Argentine socialism was pedagogical: its task was to 'raise' the proletariat to become a guiding light capable of promoting progress.³

The development of Argentine socialism was part of the more general movement of constitution and articulation of social democratic parties at the international level – delegates representing Argentine social democracy participated in all the congresses of the Second International, from Paris, in 1889, to Basel, in 1912. During these formative years, the PS experienced a series of discussions similar to those shaping international social democracy: there was a systematic effort to delineate differences with anarchists, a debate on the necessity and the possibility of developing an independent political party, and a heated discussion on the relationship that should exist between political and trade union organizations.⁴ Overall, a moderate, evolutionary, and positivist

³ *La Vanguardia*, 7 April 1894.

⁴ One of the consequences of these discussions was the split of a Sorelian, revolutionary syndicalist faction, influential in certain skilled trades, in 1906. For a recent account, see

perspective tinged the political personality of Justo's party, which was committed to parliamentary practices, in favour of developing consumer's co-operatives, and increasingly apprehensive towards industrial action. The confidence in science and in the 'laws of evolution' led to an interpretation that saw the civilizing process, progress, and, ultimately, socialism, as not contradictory but complementary and necessary stages of the development of societies. A marked and proud ideological syncretism, which combined Marx, Engels, Darwin, and Spencer, was one of its most characteristic elements.⁵

For Argentine socialists, 'political action' was the keyword, the major task of their organization, and the quintessential difference with their anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist adversaries, who were much more radical and stronger in trade unions and labour federations. Socialists understood political action as a set of interconnected tasks: building a party to spread their ideas, organizing and educating the workers, and participating in the polls to get parliamentary representation. Unlike their comrades in other countries, during this period Argentine socialists did not have to face a system of restricted suffrage or property-based franchise. According to 1909 figures, however, only 15 per cent of the country's total population had the right to vote. The reason was that not only women and children under 18 could not vote, but also foreigners. In a country that relied on a large migrant labour force, this restriction meant that a sizeable portion of the working class remained disenfranchised.⁶

In this context, the call for workers to become Argentine citizens so as to gain the right to vote was a key part of the broader campaign to promote political action as the most desirable tactic for the working class. This was combined with an openly pro-European stance, which asserted that migrants were bound to play a decisive role in the struggle against a fraudulent and oligarchic electoral system, dominated by corrupted native politicians. In 1894, *La Vanguardia* pointed out that the proletariat of the cities, 'mostly of European origin', represented 'the most intelligent and educated element of the Argentine working class'.⁷ The election of the young lawyer Alfredo Palacios (1878–1965) as a

A. Belkin, *Sindicalismo revolucionario y movimiento obrero en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2018). On the history of the anarchist current, see I. Oved, *El anarquismo y el movimiento obrero en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1978); J. Suriano, *Anarquistas, cultura y política libertaria en Buenos Aires, 1880–1910* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2001); and Geoffroy de Laforcade, Chapter 21, in Volume I.

5 J. Franzé, *El concepto de política en Juan B. Justo* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1993); J. Aricó, *La hipótesis de Justo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999); H. Tarcus, *Marx en la Argentina. Sus primeros lectores obreros, intelectuales y científicos* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2007).

6 H. Sábato et al., *Historia de las elecciones en la Argentina, 1805–2011* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 2011).

7 *La Vanguardia*, 9 June 1894.

member of the chamber of deputies for the period 1904–8 (widely acclaimed as ‘the first socialist deputy of the Americas’) played a key role in the early development of Argentine socialism. Between 1904 and 1908, he carried out energetic activity in the chamber, preparing a lengthy list of bills, which laid the foundations of protective labour legislation in the country.

As happened elsewhere, in early twentieth-century Argentina the conspicuous presence of women in factories and workshops became a cause of concern for many male workers. There was, among the ranks of the emerging labour movement, a sense of restlessness and alarm towards what was seen as a disturbing alteration of the status quo. Against this background, socialists considered that female labour exerted competition on male wages, jeopardized the bodies of the ‘weaker sex’, and kept women away from home, thus neglecting their maternal duties. At the same time, however, they systematically denounced abuses suffered by female workers and attempted to make visible their situation of exploitation. Moreover, since the 1900s, socialists created female organizations within the party (the Centro Socialista Femenino was established in 1902) and leaders such as Alicia Moreau (1885–1986) played an important role in the early feminist movement and in the struggle for women’s suffrage.⁸

All in all, fourteen years after the founding congress, when Justo represented Argentine socialists in the Copenhagen congress of the International in 1910, the party could show substantial development to their comrades in other countries. While still a small organization when compared with other (European) socialist parties, with an unstable and fluctuating membership, it was the most important socialist organization of the Americas at the time. The average number of members paying monthly fees had increased from 742 in 1902 to 1,200 in 1910, whereas the 19 local centres represented in the founding congress had turned into 35 in 1908. A couple of months before the first congress, in March 1896, the party had made its first electoral appearance in Buenos Aires, with a decidedly mediocre result. Fourteen years later, the party won almost 8,000 votes in the capital city, 25 per cent of the total.⁹

8 M. Nari, *Políticas de maternidad y maternalismo político. Buenos Aires (1890–1940)* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2005); M. Z. Lobato, *Historia de las trabajadoras en la Argentina (1869–1960)* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2007); D. Barrancos, ‘Socialismo y sufragio femenino. Notas para su historia (1890–1947)’, in H. Camarero and C. M. Herrera (eds.), *El Partido Socialista en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005), pp. 159–83; L. Poy, ‘Entre el discurso maternalista y la emancipación de las mujeres. El Partido Socialista argentino y la organización de las trabajadoras a comienzos del siglo xx’, *Revista de Historia Americana y Argentina* 55 (2020), pp. 155–86.

9 Partido Socialista, *Movimiento socialista y obrero* (Buenos Aires: La Vanguardia, 1910).

Three Decades of Growth and Schisms: 1912–1943

During the 1910s, a series of momentous events, at both national and international levels, left their imprint on the history of Argentine socialism. The development of a belligerent labour movement challenged the conservative political regime.¹⁰ In May 1910, amid official patriotic celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the revolution that precipitated independence from Spain, the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist leadership of the trade union movement launched a general strike which failed under harsh police intervention. But repression was not enough: two years later, conservative President Roque Sáenz Peña enforced a series of electoral reforms that sought to expand the legitimacy of the political regime and established a system of secret and compulsory voting based on a universal census. While still excluding women and foreigners, the reform implied a major transformation in political terms, and it convinced the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) – a party formed in the 1890s after a series of frustrated armed uprisings against the regime – to end its abstentionist policy and join the electoral arena.¹¹

Whereas before 1912 fraud and low turnout had worked against the success of the PS's moderate and reformist line, things changed after the electoral reform, notably in the city of Buenos Aires. Not only did Palacios find himself back in parliament, so too did Juan B. Justo and other major party leaders like Nicolás Repetto (1871–1965), Mario Bravo (1882–1944), and Enrique Dickmann (1874–1955), who reached the Chamber of Deputies, and, in 1913, after obtaining first place in the city of Buenos Aires, Enrique del Valle Iberlucea (1877–1921) became 'the first socialist senator of the Americas'.¹² Although they were a minority, for the first time socialists became noticeable actors in institutional politics, which at the same time added to the reputation and prestige of the more moderate leaders. Their influence in trade unions continued to be secondary, in a period where the labour movement was mostly dominated by revolutionary syndicalists, who gained control of the Federación Obrera Regional Argentina in its 9th Congress of 1915. Despite this, Argentine socialists saw their success in the parliamentary arena as

10 R. Falcón, 'Izquierdas, régimen político, cuestión étnica y cuestión social en Argentina, 1880–1912', *Anuario de la Escuela de Historia* 12 (1987), pp. 378–87.

11 R. Martínez Mazzola, '¿Males pasajeros? El Partido Socialista frente a las consecuencias de la Ley Sáenz Peña', *Archivos de historia del movimiento obrero y la izquierda* 6 (2015), pp. 53–72.

12 M. Becerra, *Marxismo y feminismo en el primer socialismo argentino*. Enrique Del Valle Iberlucea (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2009).

a proof of the correctness of the political strategy advocated during the previous decades.

However, large clouds were gathering on the horizon. In the first place, because the electoral reform ultimately led the way to a resounding victory of Hipólito Yrigoyen (1852–1933), the candidate of the UCR, in the 1916 presidential elections. Yrigoyen's coming to power confronted the PS with the challenge of standing against a government that enjoyed popular support and which even sought to arbitrate in labour conflicts, in particular when strikes were led by certain trade unionist leaders willing to negotiate with the authorities.¹³ Far from showing sympathy towards Yrigoyen, the PS developed an extremely critical and oppositional stance against someone they considered to be the 'last *caudillo*' – another representative of the much-criticized '*política criolla*'. Although the socialists recognized that Yrigoyen expressed the popular will, they underlined that his government was nothing but a bourgeois government, which favoured the capitalists and did not transform the relations of production.¹⁴

On the other hand, international events, which had such a profound impact on the social democratic movement worldwide, were also leaving their mark in Argentina. When the First World War started, the PS's initial reaction was one of bewilderment and uncertainty. Attached to a strong repudiation of dialectics, and unable to accept that the same forces that led to the development of capitalism could also bring about its collapse, Justo could merely attribute the outbreak of war to the survival of protectionism and the deficient development of free trade. It was just a matter of time for him to side with the Allied powers, and more so when Germany's naval war harassed Argentine merchant ships, thus damaging the country's commerce.

The crisis accelerated in 1917. The socialist leadership and the parliamentary group were increasingly in favour of the Allies, notably after the February Revolution in Russia, the entrance of the United States into the war, and the surge of Germany's submarine warfare against merchant ships of all flags. But a leftist and internationalist tendency was growing. Under pressure from these sectors, which obtained a minority representation in the executive committee, the party held an extraordinary congress in April 1917, at which the internationalists won an unexpected victory and adopted an

13 D. Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

14 R. Martínez Mazzola, 'El Partido Socialista y sus interpretaciones del radicalismo argentino (1890–1930)', PhD dissertation, University of Buenos Aires, 2008.

anti-war resolution. Despite this blow, the leadership deepened their pro-Allied line: in September, after several incidents involving the German fleet, the socialist parliamentary group seconded an initiative put forward by conservatives that called for the severing of relations with Germany. Even though the resolution did not change Yrigoyen's neutral posture, this flagrant violation of the April congress resolution precipitated a crisis within the party. The parliamentary group announced that they were putting their resignation as parliamentarians up for consideration in a 'general vote' of party members. The manoeuvre was successful: the general vote served as a plebiscite and the leadership used this support to quickly expel the internationalists from the party. In January 1918, they created the Partido Socialista Internacional: three years later they became the Communist Party of Argentina.¹⁵

Once the cycle of labour unrest of 1918–21 ended, the 1920s showed a relative stabilization of the political situation and a consolidation of the reformist stance of the PS. Its parliamentary presence was reinforced by the good results in the capital – where socialists continued to compete fiercely with the UCR and managed to win on a couple of occasions – and also, more slowly, in other provinces, a process that even led to socialists coming to power in a number of medium-sized municipalities. By 1927, the PS had 18 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, out of 158, and played an important role in a splintered political landscape after the division of the ruling UCR into two rival fractions. The party's parliamentary action focused on the fight against monopolies, the protection of rural tenants and co-operatives, the promotion of women's civil rights, and the defence of non-religious education, as well as legislation encouraging free trade, progressive taxes on land ownership, workers' rights, etc.

Although it never developed a 'subculture' of its own, like many European socialist parties, the PS promoted an appreciable amount of cultural initiatives for its members and supporters. In line with the aim of 'elevating' the proletariat, the PS encouraged 'the creation and development of libraries, schools, scientific athenaeums, artistic groups, children's recreation, sports entities, hygiene campaigns, visits to museums, film screenings'.¹⁶ Many of

15 H. Camarero, *Tiempos rojos. El impacto de la Revolución Rusa en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2017); E. Corbière, *Orígenes del comunismo argentino. El Partido Socialista Internacional* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1984). A few years later, another group of PS members, known as 'terceristas' because they promoted the acceptance of the twenty-one conditions of the Communist International, broke with the party and eventually merged with the Communist Party.

16 H. Camarero and C. M. Herrera, 'El Partido Socialista en Argentina. Nudos históricos y perspectivas historiográficas', in Camarero and Herrera (eds.), *El Partido Socialista en Argentina*, p. 22.

these activities involved the visible presence of women. With the growth of mass culture in the 1920s, socialists put forward a critique of the commercialization of entertainment, but they also noticed the attraction to commercial entertainment among their followers: in the pages of *La Vanguardia* there was a growing presence of football information and screenings of Hollywood films were no exception in the cultural activities organized by the *Casa del Pueblo*.¹⁷

The PS seemed to have found a certain stability, having established itself as a reformist and moderate party critical of the UCR administrations and with a distinctly profiled Communist Party to its left. But new tensions were building up. The broader context was the important role the socialist parliamentary group started to play in Congress, where both fractions of the UCR were getting ready for the 1928 presidential elections. The PS interfered in these tensions, with a bill demanding the federal intervention of the province of Buenos Aires, governed by Yrigoyen followers. By mid-1927, however, Justo withdrew the proposal, a move that internal critics saw as a return to the criticized socialist 'neutrality'. The schism came quickly: in July the critical sectors published a manifesto of rupture, and in August they constituted the Partido Socialista Independiente (PSI). The leaders of the split were mostly young professionals and intellectuals, a cohort of leaders who had played a major role in the dispute with leftist dissidents at the end of the previous decade. Besides generational disputes, the reason for the break-up was the party's position regarding the UCR but, more generally, the question of participating in government. Although the number of members who left was smaller than in previous crises (about 1,000), the schism was very serious at the level of the leadership. Among those who created the PSI there were ten national deputies (out of a group of nineteen), three members of the executive committee, and two councillors of the capital's town hall. The main leader of the PSI, the young Antonio de Tomaso (1889–1933), was a major leader of the party – he had been a deputy without interruption since 1914, president of the parliamentary group, and candidate for vice-president in the 1922 elections.¹⁸

More dramatic events followed the schism. In January 1928, aged sixty-two and still very active, Juan B. Justo died of a heart attack. Shortly thereafter, in the 1928 legislative elections, the PSI won a resounding victory in the capital: for the first time since 1912, the PS did not obtain any seats. In the context of

17 J. Buonuome and F. Reyes (eds.), 'La cultura política de los socialistas argentinos, desde los orígenes partidarios hasta la crisis peronista', *Estudios Sociales* 55, 2 (2018), pp. 59–222.

18 R. Walter, *The Socialist Party of Argentina, 1890–1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977); H. Sanguinetti, *Los socialistas independientes* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1987).

the international economic crisis that broke out after the Wall Street Crash in October 1929, the timing of Argentina's political crisis also sped up: in September 1930, a *coup d'état* put an early end to the second Yrigoyen government and closed the period of democratic governments that had begun in 1912, starting an ill-fated history of military governments.

The dictatorship of General José Félix Uriburu thoroughly reshaped the political scene and stirred fears of a fascist adventure. In 1931, a more institutional solution eventually took shape, led by General Agustín P. Justo (a distant relative of the socialist leader), who re-established the activity of parliament and regular elections, but under seriously fraudulent practices and without the participation of the UCR, still the most popular party. Although heavily critical of Yrigoyen, the PS quickly condemned Uriburu and Justo's governments. For the first time, socialists set up an electoral alliance with another party, namely Lisandro de la Torre's Partido Demócrata Progresista, a liberal offshoot of conservative and farmer groups strong in the province of Santa Fe. The so-called Alianza Civil focused on political, rather than economic, demands and the defence of representative democracy, setting the tone of the socialist approach in the years to come. The PSI, on the other hand, supported the right-wing government, and its members made rapid progress in their integration into the state. In 1932, de Tomaso became minister of agriculture (until his early death in 1933), and, in 1933, Federico Pinedo (1895–1971) was appointed as minister of finance, with the party eventually disappearing from the political scene by the mid-1930s.

The 1930s are known in Argentine history as the 'infamous decade' – a grim period marked by economic hardship and authoritarian, fraudulent, and repressive governments. The PS was not immune to governmental persecution, but at the same time achieved substantial growth. Under the leadership of Nicolás Repetto, Justo's closest ally, together with an ascending Américo Ghioldi (1899–1984), the PS enlarged its ranks, attracted a good number of intellectuals and university professors, and likewise expanded its influence in the labour movement. Although the main stronghold of the party remained the city of Buenos Aires, socialists also experienced some growth in the interior provinces, including some experiences in communal government, where they developed a political style focused on integrity and austerity, as well as the promotion of communal services and co-operatives.¹⁹

19 S. Ferreyra and F. Martocci, *El Partido Socialista (re)configurado. Escalas y desafíos historiográficos para su estudio desde el 'interior'* (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2020).



Fig. 8.1 Supporters of the Socialist Party of Argentina during an electoral campaign, March 1930. (Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires, Argentina, item 142471.)

The main concern of the party remained its activity in the national parliament. Despite the abstentionist policy of the UCR and the fraudulent practices of the regime, notably in the interior provinces, the PS continued to take part in elections throughout this period (Figure 8.1). Immediately before the coup, it had only one deputy. After the 1931 elections, and despite the presidential triumph of Agustín P. Justo, the party could show a group of forty-three national deputies and two senators, its largest parliamentary representation ever. Socialists used this tribune to criticize the government and present bills for social legislation. Although occasionally they passed some laws, in general the party was trapped in what historian Osvaldo Graciano defined as ‘parliamentary sterility’ – a reformist party that had little chance of achieving reforms.²⁰ This was further exacerbated in political terms because the party’s parliamentary growth was largely due to the fraud against radicalism by

20 O. Graciano, ‘Los debates y las propuestas políticas del Partido Socialista de Argentina, entre la crisis mundial y el peronismo, 1930–1950’, *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 33 (2007), pp. 241–62.

a fraudulent and authoritarian government. When the UCR ended its abstentionist policy in 1935, socialist electoral influence was greatly limited.

More challenges to the party leadership emerged during these convulsive years. A new leftist line took shape, referenced in Benito Marianetti, a leader from Mendoza, which was ultimately defeated in party congresses and, in 1937, ended up breaking with the party to set up the Partido Socialista Obrero (PSO). An ephemeral group, in which some of the first Argentine Trotskyists intervened, the PSO embraced the line of the Popular Front and supported the ticket of the UCR in the 1937 presidential election, just like the Communist Party. Another line of criticism, much less radical and in tune with developments within European social democracy, was led by Rómulo Bogliolo, who criticized the traditional free-trade policy that had characterized the PS since its foundation and argued in favour of interventionist economic policies. Far from precipitating a new rupture, these ideas started to make their way into the party's leadership and rank and file and were adopted by a party congress in 1938.²¹

On the eve of and in the first years of the Second World War, the PS could show organizational consolidation and geographical expansion, progress in parliament, and even a certain continuity in terms of administration in some municipalities. In 1942, with no radical abstention, it obtained a new electoral victory in the capital. It had also achieved not inconsiderable influence at the trade union level, although at the cost of significant autonomy of these unionists from the party,²² and had changed several of its strategic principles in the economic field, giving rise to more nationalist and protectionist approaches. But things were about to change, and dramatically.

Crisis and Fragmentation under the Shadow of Peronism: 1943–1973

The rise to power of Juan Domingo Perón (1895–1974) completely altered the political scene and the history of the country – and, of course, it also twisted the course of the history of the PS. In 1945, the situation seemed promising for

21 J. C. Portantiero, 'Imágenes de la crisis. El socialismo argentino en la década de 1930', *Prismas. Revista de historia intelectual* 6 (2002), pp. 231–41; M. Luzzi, 'El viraje de la ola. Las primeras discusiones sobre la intervención del Estado en el socialismo argentino', *Estudios Sociales* 20 (2001), pp. 165–80.

22 D. Ceruso, 'El vínculo entre las izquierdas y el movimiento obrero. Un análisis de la experiencia del Partido Socialista argentino en los últimos años de la década de 1930', *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, 2020, available at <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.75901>.

social democracy, at least in certain Western countries. The world war had ended with the collapse of Nazi fascism, and in Argentina the military government that had emerged after the 1943 coup faced a severe crisis. Starting as secretary of labour and later becoming vice president, Perón gained visibility and obtained support from the trade union leadership – including many labour leaders who were members of the PS but had shown significant autonomy from the party leadership – but was increasingly questioned by all of the traditional parties and business groups. Around October 1945, the situation reached a decisive point: Perón was forced to resign, but a workers' mobilization on 17 October occupied the Plaza de Mayo in the centre of the capital and demanded his return. The mobilization, which later became a foundational episode of the Peronist history, altered the political situation and cleared the way for the holding of presidential elections.

In this context, the PS enthusiastically joined the Unión Democrática, a broad coalition that encompassed virtually all existing parties (the UCR, communists, and even conservatives). Although socialists ran with their own candidates for parliamentary positions, they endorsed the UCR ticket led by José Tamborini and Enrique Mosca. To a certain extent, this coalition was a result of the common activity that socialists and communists had organized jointly with the UCR in previous years, with an anti-fascist tinge.²³ Looking, as usual, at what was happening in Europe, the PS assumed that the post-war period would be one of growth and a rise in their political fortunes, and that Perón's period of grace was over, as he would be associated with the defeated Nazi fascism.

Matters turned out differently, as Perón achieved a resounding victory in the presidential election of February 1946. Of course, what was missing in the socialist analyses was the role that nationalist and anti-imperialist mobilizations could play in backward countries. The Unión Democrática was publicly backed by the American ambassador, Spruille Braden, a fact successfully exploited by Perón, who shaped the election as an alternative between nation and imperialism, with the slogan '*Braden o Perón*'. Backed with extensive popular support, Perón set out to expand his social legislation projects and managed to win the support of the labour movement, organized around the powerful CGT and his own Partido Laborista, which was soon renamed the Partido Peronista.

23 Andrés Bisso, 'De Acción Democrática a la Unión Democrática. El civismo antifascista como prédica política y estrategia partidaria del socialismo argentino, 1940–1946', *Prismas. Revista de historia intelectual* 6 (2002), pp. 257–64.

Things could not have been worse for the Socialist Party. The Unión Democrática did not survive the 1946 elections, and the UCR became the leading parliamentary opposition.²⁴ For the first time since 1912, the PS was left with no representation in the national Congress. Moreover, not only did the labour movement rally around Perón, but also several prominent trade union leaders formerly affiliated with the PS became ministers in his cabinet.²⁵ Seriously weakened, the socialists also suffered strong repression by the new administration. *La Vanguardia* became a weekly again (it had been printed daily since 1905), until in 1947 the printing press was shut down and the party organ stopped appearing altogether. Part of the socialist leadership decided to go into exile in Montevideo.

The government sanctioned significant economic reforms that increased the weight of the state in the economy and extended social protection measures that had traditionally been in the socialist platform – women's suffrage was enacted in 1947. Meanwhile, the PS moved in the opposite direction. The shift in the party programme that had emerged in the late 1930s towards a certain economic protectionism was abandoned and the focus instead moved towards demanding public freedoms and republicanism. During these years, Américo Ghioldi became the major party leader and the more vocal advocate of a strong anti-Peronist line. Although a 'civic' and republican element had always been present in the views of Argentine socialists, it also coexisted with other elements, more identified with economic reforms and labour demands. With Perón firmly established in power, enjoying broad popular support and the backing of the labour movement, the interpretation of Peronism as 'totalitarianism' permeated the entire socialist discourse.²⁶

In a manifesto distributed in October 1948, the party stated that: 'All the elements of the fascist regime are already there ... we have seen all the characteristic germs of totalitarianism grow in the face of the indifference of a people deceived by the false mirages of unbridled demagoguery.' Any attempt to compromise or even analyse the reasons for the working class to support Perón was seen as treachery, and certain internal dissidences, such as those of Julio V. González, Dardo Cúneo, or an aged Enrique Dickmann, were

24 Marcela García Sebastiani, *Los antiperonistas en la Argentina peronista. Radicales y socialistas en la política argentina entre 1943 y 1951* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005).

25 Raanan Rein, *In the Shadow of Perón: Juan Atilio Bramuglia and the Second Line of Argentina's Populist Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

26 Carlos M. Herrera, '¿Adiós al proletariado? El Partido Socialista bajo el peronismo, 1945–1955' (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2016); Ricardo Martínez Mazzola, 'Nacionalismo, peronismo, comunismo. Los usos del totalitarismo en el discurso del Partido Socialista Argentino (1946–1953)', *Prismas. Revista de historia intelectual* 15 (2011), pp. 105–25.

defeated by Ghioldi in party congresses. By the early 1950s, the PS line became so radically anti-Peronist that it even promoted and supported military uprisings against the government. At the same time, state and para-state repression against the party escalated quickly, including, in 1953, the looting and destruction of the Casa del Pueblo, a monumental building in downtown Buenos Aires which held one of the biggest labour libraries in Latin America.

Against this background, it came as no surprise that the PS reacted enthusiastically when, in September 1955, a military coup deposed Perón and established a new military government: 'Now we have *patria*! . . . We must all bury the past. The revolution has to reach all sectors, agencies, laws, regulations. We all have to sow. Democracy must grow.'²⁷ Socialist leaders took part in some 'advisory' bodies created by the military government and joined the operation of 'repossession' of trade unions, usually at gunpoint and supported by police forces. Alfredo Palacios became ambassador to Uruguay.

Apart from some expulsions and small fractures, the PS had come out of the Peronist decade without losing party unity. But Ghioldi's extreme anti-Peronist stand could not last long without bringing about a deep crisis. In the years following the 1955 coup, not only was the liberal and anti-Peronist line of the PS deepened: it also proved that broad sectors of the working class remained loyal to Peronism.²⁸ Undermined by popular resistance, the dictatorship had to accept an electoral solution, although it kept Peronism banned: in February 1958, the radical Arturo Frondizi (1908–95) became president, counting on Perón's support from his exile in Spain. Added to this, there was a polarized political climate, a growing repudiation of US policy, and soon thereafter the impact of the Cuban Revolution. As with other political forces in the country and the region, the position regarding nationalist movements with strong popular roots became the trigger for a definitive schism in the PS.

Between 1955 and 1958, the internal climate became more tense and the executive committee was divided. In the presidential elections of 1958, the party ticket, Alfredo Palacios–Carlos Sánchez Viamonte, got scarcely 3 per cent of the vote – leaving socialists, once again, without any parliamentary representation.²⁹ Against this background, the 44th party congress met in

27 *La Vanguardia*, 27 October 1955.

28 Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

29 Cecilia Blanco, 'La erosión de la unidad partidaria en el Partido Socialista, 1955–1958', in Camarero and Herrera (eds.), *El Partido Socialista en Argentina*, pp. 367–89.

the city of Rosario, where a heterogeneous coalition of young members, supported by some older leaders, confronted Ghioldi. The congress was suspended after serious incidents, some of them violent. A few days later, a majority of the national committee expelled the supporters of Ghioldi and Repetto, who set up a parallel committee. Soon afterwards the division crystallized and two new parties emerged: the Partido Socialista Democrático (PSD), which began to publish the newspaper *Afirmación*, and the Partido Socialista Argentino (PSA), which continued with *La Vanguardia*.

The schism of 1958 started a process of scattering and waning of social democratic forces that lasts to the present day. Under the clear leadership of Ghioldi, assisted by an old Nicolás Repetto until his death in 1965, the PSD kept the manners and ideas of that liberal socialism that had shaped the party during Perón's government. The party maintained its unity for several decades, retaining control of most of the old party's financial assets and its relationships with other ancillary organizations, such as the housing co-operative El Hogar Obrero. The PSD advocated an intensely hostile orientation towards Peronism and even towards the entirety of the left-wing activism of the period. Nor did it become a party integrated into the system, however, in a period marked by scarce parliamentary activity and frequent military interventions. Apart from a brief period in the mid-1960s, the PSD never achieved parliamentary representation at the national level. It had some influence in the capital's town hall, in the provincial legislature of Buenos Aires, and in certain municipalities such as Mar del Plata, where some of its leaders even remained as public officials during military dictatorships. Américo Ghioldi was ambassador to Portugal during the Videla administration.³⁰

The PSA, on the other hand, was much more left wing and heterogeneous and split quickly. In fact, it was merely a transitory coalition between various sectors, only banded together in their hostility to Ghioldi. On the one hand, there was a more radicalized youth sector; on the other hand, much more moderate and older leaders such as Alfredo Palacios, Alicia Moreau (Justo's last wife), Ramón Muñiz, Carlos Sánchez Viamonte, José Luis Romero, etc. For some years, they remained together – in February 1961, they even secured a significant victory in the elections for senator of the capital, won by Palacios with a pro-Cuba campaign. But tensions became untenable, and a break-up occurred in 1961. The left-wing sector won the internal elections for the party leadership, and the traditional sector reacted by occupying the party

30 Silvana Ferreyra, 'Antiperonismo sin Perón. Imágenes del Partido Socialista Democrático', *Prismas. Revista de historia intelectual* 19, 1 (2015), pp. 89–109.

headquarters and local offices. This resulted in the rupture between a PSA Secretaría Visconti and a PSA Secretaría Tieffenberg, which later became the Partido Socialista Argentino de Vanguardia (PSAV).

The PSAV represents a sort of link between the history of social democracy and that of the so-called 'New Left', which was in full swing in the 1960s in various parts of the world.³¹ Alexis Latendorf (1928–2007), one of the younger leaders who played a leading role in this break-up, wrote a farewell letter to Palacios in which he claimed that it was 'almost a relief to have lost all the old masters. We are no longer committed to a distant and dusty, *fin-de-siècle* and hierarchical world. Our examples, the ones we want, are our peers, our equals. We love Fidel, a boy. Guevara, a boy. Raúl, a boy.'³² In its first congress, the PSAV defined its socialism as 'Argentine, Latin American, *Fidelista*' and questioned the major ideological principles that had articulated Argentine social democracy, under the lens of a reappraisal of Peronism. This led to even greater fragmentation: the PSAV's many different sectors ended up converging with other groups or forming their own organizations in the complex and volatile political landscape of the 1960s.

Struggling to Find a Place in the Political Scene:

1973–2015

To the left of the PSD but to the right of the buoyant world of pro-guerrilla groups and Trotskyist and Maoist parties that emerged in this period, the group still called the PSA struggled to remain active and united during the 1960s and 1970s. After a good election in 1963, the deaths of several important leaders in the mid-1960s (Muñiz, Carreira, Palacios) led to a new crisis. One of its youngest leaders, Juan Carlos Coral, broke with the party and ended up joining forces with Trotskyist leader Nahuel Moreno, thus creating the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, forebear of the Movimiento al Socialismo, one of the largest Trotskyist parties in the world.

Those who had kept the name PSA, meanwhile, converged with youth sectors from the interior of the country and established the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) in April 1972, one year before the military dictatorship finally allowed the Peronist Party to run again for elections. The programme of the PSP incorporated elements of economic nationalism and showed a clear

31 María Cristina Tortti, *El 'viejo' Partido Socialista y los orígenes de la 'nueva' izquierda, 1955–1965* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009). On the international New Left, see Gerd-Rainer Horn, Chapter 25, this volume.

32 *Revista Che*, 2 June 1961.

sympathy for Peronism, although it was reluctant to join that movement. In September 1972, *La Vanguardia* called for 'a clear understanding of the role of Peronism in the political and social process of the Argentine working class, and a solid anti-imperialist position and support for the liberation movements and full recognition of the role of the state'.³³ The early history of the PSP was eventful and ended up crystallizing into a new division, between the sector that kept that name and a smaller group that, after a long legal battle, ended up calling itself the Partido Socialista Auténtico in 1983. Under the leadership of Guillermo Estévez Boero (1930–2000), the PSP survived the military dictatorship and preserved a large degree of organizational stability, exerting some influence in the student movement and experiencing an expansion in the province of Santa Fe.³⁴

The demise of the military junta, in 1983, gave way to a new political era, in which human rights and public liberties occupied a pivotal role. This could open up new possibilities for social democratic parties, something that the European leaders of the Socialist International quickly understood – in other South American countries such as Chile and Uruguay, traditional socialist parties played a crucial role in the formation of 'centre-left' coalitions that became major political actors.³⁵ In Argentina, however, this role was occupied by the UCR, whose presidential candidate Raúl Alfonsín (1927–2009) defeated the Peronist party in open elections for the first time since 1946, and attracted several progressive and left-wing intellectuals, for instance, those grouped in the so-called 'Club de Cultura Socialista'. In 1996, the UCR joined the Socialist International and Alfonsín became one of its vice presidents.³⁶

The various groups that still situated themselves within the socialist tradition remained in the margins of the political arena and realized they had to move ahead towards a reunification. The PSP elected Estévez Boero as a national deputy in 1987 and, more importantly, soon thereafter won the municipal elections for mayor in Rosario, the third-largest city in the country, which became their stronghold. The PSD, for its part, kept a certain influence in the capital and in other cities such as Mar del Plata. At the end of the 1980s, these two groups converged in the so-called Unidad Socialista. Formal reunification did not take place until 2002, under the old name of the Partido

33 *La Vanguardia*, September 1972.

34 F. M. Suárez, 'Los orígenes del Partido Socialista Popular. ¿Entre el viejo socialismo y la 'nueva izquierda'? (1972–1975)', *Papeles de Trabajo* 16 (2015), pp. 312–37.

35 F. Pedrosa, *La otra izquierda. La socialdemocracia en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2012).

36 See www.socialistinternational.org/news/in-memoriam/raul-alfonsin-1927-2009-752.

Socialista. Accepting their weak place in the political scene, in the last decades socialists attempted to enter several political alliances dominated either by the UCR or by the Peronist party. Following the neoliberal government of Peronist Carlos Menem, in the late 1990s the PS joined the so-called *Alianza*, a centre-left coalition that won the 1999 elections. The new experiment proved unfortunate: President Fernando de la Rúa stepped down in December 2001 amid a dramatic economic crisis and widespread popular turmoil, opening the way to a new era of Peronist-dominated governments, led by Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández.

The PS remained in the opposition and, in the province of Santa Fe, a historic socialist stronghold, it became the key actor of a centre-left alliance that remained in power for a long period (2007–19). Drawing upon this structure, socialist leader Hermes Binner (1943–2020) became the presidential candidate of the *Frente Amplio Progresista* (FAP) and achieved second place in the 2011 elections, although far behind the re-elected Cristina Fernández. The FAP, however, failed to keep its political presence when most of its members, including several leaders of the PS, converged in a centre-right coalition, *Cambiemos*, which brought neoliberal Mauricio Macri to power in 2015.³⁷

Conclusion

Despite the heterogeneity caused by differences in trade, gender, and ethnic origin, the working class of Argentina developed a significant unity and set up several trade unions and political organizations, in a period marked by capitalist consolidation and the integration of the local agrarian bourgeoisie as a minor partner of British imperialism. Socialists contributed to this process and were at the same time influenced by it. Since the 1890s, and for many decades, the PS was a significant part of the political life of the working class. Its reformist and moderate strategy, oriented towards electoral participation and constructed after the example of most of the European parties of the Second International, met with obstacles in the early years of the century, and this explains its relative loss in influence in comparison with anarchism, and the break-up of revolutionary syndicalists. After the electoral reform of 1912, however, the PS made progress in terms of electoral representation, especially in the city of Buenos Aires.

37 R. Martínez Mazzola, 'Ni populistas, ni conservadores. Dilemas y desafíos del socialismo democrático argentino', *Nueva Sociedad* 261 (2016), pp. 168–77.

But the PS achieved its longed-for parliamentary growth at a time of worldwide collapse of the old social democratic edifice: the First World War laid bare all the frailties of the party's positivist and gradualist stance and increased the weight of nationalism – soon thereafter, the Russian Revolution definitively split virtually all social democratic parties worldwide. In the case of Argentina, the electoral reform had also cleared the way for the first national-populist experience. The PS resisted the pressure of Yrigoyen's popularity and remained in opposition. It also survived the split that gave rise to the Communist Party, but at the cost of becoming a group that rejected the revolutionary path while lacking the possibility of gaining access to state power by parliamentary means. It was a medium-sized reformist party, made up of skilled workers and middle-class intellectuals and professionals, satisfied with being a minority in parliament, without a greater capacity to implement reforms (beyond some experiences of communal management), with a significant development in the cultural sphere and a limited presence in the labour movement. These contradictions led to a substantial split from the right of the party, with the emergence of a group (the PSI) whose cadres ended up being fully integrated into the state.

In the 1930s, despite the economic crisis and the dictatorship, the PS did not change the nature of its strategic and political agenda. With the UCR outlawed and a larger parliamentary presence and trade union influence, the PS seemed to have found a place in the sun. Towards the end of the decade, Argentine socialism also reformulated part of its programmatic bases, moving closer to certain protectionist and nationalist elements in the economic sphere, as did its European counterparts.

But the emergence of a second national-populist experiment, Peronism, dramatically altered the political scenario and pulled socialism apart. The combination of repression and labour integration into the regime, together with the disappearance of its parliamentary group, proved fatal for the PS and confined it to adhering to a liberal critique of Perón's regime, in terms of totalitarianism versus republic. In contrast to what had happened under the UCR administrations, the PS could not resist with an intermediate position between national-populism and the conservative and right-wing sectors: without room for manoeuvre, socialists aligned themselves unambiguously with anti-Peronism, even supporting the military coup of 1955.

As was the case in many other countries of the Global South, the emergence of nationalist governments in the mid-twentieth century decisively affected the subsequent political scenario. With strong influence in labour ranks and a rhetoric that combined social reform and anti-imperialist

elements, Peronism would come to occupy a central place in the political sphere and deprived social democracy of a role like the one it played in the post-war period in a number of Western countries. Moreover, it ended up breaking almost all political forces of the left, which were divided over the left's policy towards Peronism. The PS was no anomaly: although it resisted almost without schisms during the Peronist period, in the immediate aftermath tensions erupted and the party broke in two.

The most moderate sector remained unified by adopting the most anti-Peronist stance: in practice, it no longer belonged to the political universe of the left and confined itself to a liberal line, keeping some influence in some districts at the municipal level. The most left-wing sector at the time of the rupture, for its part, did not remain unified: the more youthful and anti-imperialist sectors progressively fragmented and became part of several political experiences of the New Left, while a more traditional sector managed to preserve a certain organizational continuity and merged in the PSP, which navigated the 1970s with a discourse more akin to Peronism.

After the fall of the last dictatorship, when a fertile scenario for social democracy could be opened, once again Argentine socialism (or its remnants) discovered that other political actors filled the space. In this new political era, socialists merged into a single party but never found a relevant place in political life. At the trade union level, the reformist strategy was completely dominated by Peronism. In the political arena, the variations of the so-called 'centre-left' have been led either by fractions of the UCR or by the Peronist party. Against this background, socialism had to limit itself to playing the role of second (or third or fourth) fiddle in different political alliances. The exception was the province of Santa Fe, where it led this coalition and governed the province for a lengthy period.

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The Partido dos Trabalhadores in Brazil

MARCELO BADARÓ MATTOS

In his autobiographical book, British historian Eric Hobsbawm refers to the 'Workers' Party' (a usual translation of Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) as an exception:

None of the political experiments I have watched from near or far since the Cuban Revolution has made much lasting difference. Only two have looked as though they might, but both are too recent for judgement. The first, which must warm the cockles of all old red hearts, is the national rise, since its foundation in 1980, of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores or PT) in Brazil . . . It is a late example of a classic mass socialist Labour Party and movement, such as emerged in Europe before 1914.¹

In the post-war period the PT can, indeed, be seen as an exception to the times: a party that emerged from mass movements of the working class in the 1980s when, in Europe, the labour and social democratic parties, founded in the times of the Second International, were experiencing a period of decline in their political weight and/or of their original social bases. In the years following its creation, in one way or another, the PT managed to keep itself connected to trade unions and to grassroots social movements, achieving influence among the masses and eventually attaining the government of the country by means of a leadership formed in the factory shop-floor struggles.

The trajectory of the Brazilian Workers' Party will be addressed here in chronological sequence, highlighting the following stages: first, its origin and growth in the midst of the social struggles of the late 1970s and during the 1980s; secondly, its electoral growth and burgeoning occupation of institutional spaces in the 1990s, amid a process of a retraction of the social struggles that had marked the preceding decade; thirdly, its years in office of the federal

Translated by Martin Charles Nicholl; revised by Rebecca Freitas.

¹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 382.

government after the election of Luiz Inácio ‘Lula’ da Silva to the presidency of the republic in 2002; and, fourthly, the most recent period that began with the removal of President Dilma Rousseff in the wave of an unconventional *coup d’état* that marked the end of the cycle of PT governments and the ascension of the far right in Brazilian politics. Cross-cutting those chronological sections, however, runs a consistent effort to understand the party’s organizational and programmatic–strategic dimensions, its social–electoral bases, its relations with the working class and with Brazil’s ruling classes, and its role during the periods it was in government.

The Origins

By the end of the 1970s, the military dictatorship that had been implemented in Brazil in 1964 sought to contain the electoral opposition as a part of its strategy to carry out a political transition controlled from above. At that time, the opposition was organized in only one party – the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, MDB) – due to rules imposed by the dictatorial government. To that end, a party reform was approved in 1979 which kept the party that sustained the regime united but fragmented the opposition with the emergence of five other parties, among them the Partido dos Trabalhadores, which was formally founded in February 1980.

The origins of the Workers’ Party are intimately bound up with the resumption of strikes and social mobilization that took place in the final period of the military dictatorship. The party political reform was one of the strategies the dictatorial government formulated to ensure control over a ‘slow and gradual’ democratic transition process, as they put it. That was associated with the revocation of the harshest dictatorship legislation, the Institutional Act No. 5 (1968) (AI5), an end to prior censorship of the press, amnesty for political prisoners, exiles, and those whose rights had been removed, and the reintroduction of direct elections for state governments, which had been suspended since 1965. The process unfolded in the context of the international capitalist crisis and falling economic growth rates compared with the high rates registered in the early 1970s. With wages and salaries at very low levels and rigidly controlled by the dictatorial legislation, harsh working conditions and unemployment knocking at the door, groups of the working class in various economic sectors began to test the limits of the restrictive legislation concerning the right to strike and state control over the trade unions.

Campaigns to obtain a restoration of the purchasing power of wages and salaries were launched in 1977 and, in the following year, the first strikes involving entire categories of workers broke out in various states of Brazil after ten years of trade union struggles with the government having been absolutely silenced. In the years that followed, despite the repressive efforts of the government or even some few concessions in the government's economic policy designed to alleviate the effect of the extremely high inflation rate on salaries, the strikes spread to various sectors of the working class all over the country. The first serious strike in that process of the rise in trade union struggles took place in mid-1978 among workers of the modern automobile industries of São Bernardo do Campo in the metropolitan area of São Paulo. The young president of the union at that time, Luiz Inácio da Silva, known as Lula, became the main spokesman for that revival of struggles which came to be associated with the 'new trade unionism'. Olívio Dutra, a Porto Alegre bank worker, and Jacó Bittar, an oil industry worker from Campinas, were two other leaders identified with the emergence of the so-called 'new trade unionism' and they were to play a leading role in the creation of the PT.

In January 1979, the plenary session of a Congress of the Metalworkers Union held in the city of Lins, in the countryside of the state of São Paulo, approved a resolution defending the creation of a workers' party. On 1 May 1979, an informal committee launched a charter of principles and initiated dialogues with politicians of the MDB, which up until then had been the only opposition party allowed under the two-party system implanted by the dictatorship. Very few MDB politicians joined the new party, and several union figures criticized what they felt to be a hasty decision on the part of the committees responsible for launching the charter on 1 May (and implicitly discredited its proponents, who were mostly connected to left-wing organizations with a Trotskyite tendency). Nevertheless, from its creation the movement began attracting others more associated with the 'new unionism', militants of leftist groups, intellectuals, participants in various urban and rural social movements, and members of the ecclesiastic grassroots communities (*comunidades eclesiais de base*, CEB) organized by progressive sectors of the Catholic Church, whose reference was the Theology of Liberation.

In October 1979, at a meeting attended by roughly 100 people in São Bernardo dos Campos, the movement for the creation of the Workers' Party was officially structured with the formation of a provisional national committee. In November of the same year, the National Congress approved

a bill putting an end to the two-party system and officially opened the way for the organization of a new multi-party system. On 10 January 1980, around 500 people met at Sion College, also in São Paulo, to sign a manifesto as founders of the party, and that event is recognized as being the official date of the party's foundation.²

Throughout the 1980s, the PT was built up and began to become more prominent in the political and social struggles of the country. That was paralleled by and integrated with the growth in the number of strikes and the reorganization of the trade union movement, with the creation in 1983 of a confederation, the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), as well as with the emergence of a vigorous movement of landless rural workers fighting for agrarian reform – the Landless Worker's Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra, MST) and other significant social movements.

The 1982 elections for state governors and federal representatives and senators were a strategic stage in that process of obtaining the PT's definitive registration. Great expectations centred on São Paulo, the party's birthplace and the state where the PT had its top name, Lula, standing in the state government elections.

The central theme of his campaign speeches was access to power for the working class, linking the struggle for the expansion of citizens' rights to the class contents of the party's proposals expressed in the slogan 'Workers vote for workers.' Although some of the campaign rallies drew crowds of up to 20,000 people, the votes for Lula frustrated the PT members' hopes. In the election, 1,144,648 people cast their votes for the worker candidate, who took fourth place. In the national sphere, the PT received only 3.3 per cent of the votes, electing eight federal representatives (six in São Paulo) and twelve state representatives in Brazil as a whole. Two municipal governments were won: Diadema (in São Paulo) and Santa Quitéria (in the state of Maranhão) in the Brazilian north-east.

In August 1983, the PT embraced the idea of a large-scale grassroots campaign calling for direct elections for the president of the republic. On 27 November 1983, in response to a convocation signed by the PT, the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB, the former MDB), the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT), the CUT, the Conselho das Classes Trabalhadoras (Conclat), and various institutions of organized civil society, the first rally was held in the square in front of the Pacaembu stadium in São Paulo. Around 20,000 people, mostly PT militants, attended the event.

2 E. Coelho, *Uma esquerda para o capital. O transformismo dos grupos dirigentes do PT (1979–1998)* (São Paulo: Xamã, 2012), pp. 53–72.



Fig. 9.1 São Paulo 1982: Luiz Inácio da Silva, known throughout Brazil by his childhood nickname 'Lula', addresses a rally. He was one of the founders of the new Workers Party (PT) and was that party's candidate for governor of the state of São Paulo. (Bettmann/ Getty Images.)

In January 1984, Ulisses Guimarães, president of the PMDB, decided to engage the party in the campaign. The governor of São Paulo called a broader committee to organize a rally to be held on 27 January. The organization expected around 100,000 people to attend but in fact 250,000 came to the Praça da Sé (Cathedral Square) in São Paulo, greatly boosting the *Diretas Já!* (Direct Elections Now) movement which was destined to draw over a million people onto the streets of Rio de Janeiro and later repeat that number in São Paulo. That made the movement, originally propelled by the PT, the greatest grassroots mobilization in the history of Brazil.

However, the constitutional amendment that proposed direct elections was rejected by the House. The PT proposed that the campaign in the streets should continue, to force the dictatorship to back down. However, the PMDB, within which a group of politicians was working on behalf of a strong opposition candidature within the sphere of the electoral college, decided to suspend its participation and launched the name of Tancredo Neves, governor of Minas Gerais, to participate in the indirect dispute for the presidency.

The PT maintained its mobilization option and the position it had taken at the beginning of the *Diretas Já!* campaign and refused to participate in the electoral college. Neves was elected president of Brazil, replacing general João Batista Figueiredo. He never took office, however; he became ill and he died in April 1985. His replacement was the vice president-elect, José Sarney, a politician associated with a new party that had broken away from the political party that sustained the military regime.

In November 1985, in the first direct elections for the city halls of state capitals since the 1960s, the PT was victorious in Fortaleza, electing Maria Luisa Fontenelle, who would later leave the party. In 1986, there were elections for the new composition of the National Congress which was to function as a National Constituent Assembly. The PT had sixteen representatives elected and Lula, with 651,763 votes, polled the most votes in the whole of Brazil.

In the constituent assembly, despite its small numbers, the group of PT representatives was highly active, and its activities were boosted by campaigns that were grassroots initiatives in which the social movements managed to collect hundreds of thousands of signatures in support of certain proposals for inclusion in the constitutional text. Among the results achieved by that interaction with the social movements were progress in the universalization of the right to health and education and the inclusion of labour rights in the text of the 1988 constitution. Even so, in the final text, the PT representatives identified many examples of retreats from the more

progressive proposals that had been included and approved in the first draft of the report and, accordingly, they did not vote in favour of the final text.

With the new constitution duly approved in October 1988, the PT launched a campaign for the municipal elections scheduled for 15 November. During that year there had been around 2,000 strikes, revealing a situation of great social mobilization, especially trade union mobilizations. On 8 November, the most significant of them was a strike of steel workers at the Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN) in Volta Redonda (Rio de Janeiro), which was harshly repressed by Brazilian army troops; a tragic episode that led to the deaths of three workers. Collective protests, the organization of strikes in a context of burgeoning inflation, and the failure of the government's economic plans boiled over in the form of a collective national unrest following the Volta Redonda episode, generating electoral repercussions expressed in the evident radicalization of the vote for the opposition, which ended up benefiting the PT. In the municipal elections of that year the PT conquered the municipal executive of important state capitals like São Paulo, Porto Alegre, and Vitória. Altogether thirty-nine PT mayors were elected.

In December 1988, Lula was formally appointed as the candidate for presidential office, and in March 1989 the Green Party (Partido Verde, PV), the Brazilian Socialist Party (Partido Socialista do Brasil, PSB), and the Communist Party of Brasil (Partido Comunista do Brasil, PCdoB) formalized their support for Lula's candidature, forming the Popular Brazilian Front. In the months that followed, the presidential campaign unfolded in an atmosphere of great popular mobilization, with rallies that brought together hundreds of thousands of people, highly reminiscent of the impulse of the *Diretas Já!* campaign. Given the wider context on the global geopolitical scene – the 'fall of the Berlin wall' episode, for example, occurred on the eve of the first round of those elections – little by little the campaign acquired a highly ideologically polarized content.

Lula's campaign programme centred not only on overcoming the economic crisis but also on at the same time overcoming the glaring social inequality characteristic of Brazilian society. The main points emphasized were a sweeping agrarian reform; suspension of the external debt payments and the installation of an audit of the debt; a longer spread profile for the internal debt; price control to curb corporate profits; tax reform and combating tax evasion; and real and progressive salary increases led by a progressive increase in the official minimum salary, which within five years should be the equivalent of US \$400.

In that conjuncture of galloping inflation, strikes grew in number and intensity. On 22 and 23 March, the CUT called a national general strike that paralysed Brazil's main urban centres. The wave of strikes associated with the CUT and the PT was presented by the communication media and seen by some sectors of the party itself as being harmful to Lula's candidature even though the candidate himself reaffirmed the autonomy of the trade unions and denied any direct connection between the CUT and the PT.

The result of the first round of the elections held on 15 November showed that 25.11 per cent had voted for Fernando Collor and 14.16 per cent for Lula, with the remaining votes distributed among the twenty other candidates that had disputed the election. The result of the elections, announced a few days after the second round of voting which took place on 17 December 1989, showed that Collor was victorious with 42.75 per cent of the votes against Lula's 37.86 per cent.

It can be said that at the end of its first decade of existence, the Workers' Party did indeed justify Hobsbawm's feelings when he said that it 'must warm the cockles of all old red hearts'. After all, that party, engendered in the meeting of different working-class movements with small-scale political organization inspired by the 1917 revolution, together with intellectuals and progressive clergymen, had indeed transformed itself into a 'late example of a classic mass socialist Labour Party and movement'. There was, however, a high price to pay for being a 'late example'. At the height of the social struggles of the 1980s, in 1989 the biggest general strike in Brazilian history and the remarkable achievement of a working-class leader getting through to the second round of presidential elections coincided with the historic defeat suffered by socialist and communist movements in general stemming from the fall of socialist regimes in eastern Europe, with all the ideological consequences that process involved, including the consequences for the left world-wide. On the other hand, Fernando Collor's victory signalled Brazil's vigorous acceptance of the route of those neoliberal policies that the social struggles of the 1980s had largely managed to postpone.

The lessons of the 1989 elections were interpreted in different ways inside the party. The majority group that ran the party tended to understand that the association of the PT with strikes and the agrarian reform struggles involving occupations of land, especially those organized by the MST, was an obstacle to gaining the middle-class votes which would be decisive for achieving more significant electoral victories.

The PT was repeating the debate on the dilemmas of social democracy in the electoral terrain that, retrieving the classical reflections of the turn of the

nineteenth to the twentieth century, Adam Przeworski summed up as follows: 'Participation in electoral politics is necessary if the movement for socialism is to find mass support among workers, yet this very participation appears to obstruct the attainment of final goals.'³ Another classic dilemma the same author took up also confronted the PT at the end of the 1980s. Despite its social weight, the working class (in the strict sense of the term – workers in regular receipt of wages/salaries) usually represents a minority of the electorate. In a democratic regime a party can govern according to its programme only if it obtains a majority of votes:

The combination of minority status with majority rule constitutes the historical condition under which socialists have to administer. This objective condition imposes upon socialist parties a choice: socialists must choose between a party homogeneous in its class appeal but sentenced to perpetual electoral defeats and a party that struggles for electoral success at the cost of diluting its class character.⁴

Solving such dilemmas would not depend on the choices of PT party leaders and militants alone, but on the complex web of political and social relations from which the party emerged and developed. Albeit not totally expressed in any single document, the points that came to be known as the Popular-Democratic Programme (Programa Democrático-Popular, PDP) were presented in its first elaboration in 1987 in the political resolutions of the 5th National Meeting.⁵

In that programmatic elaboration, the PT inherited from the debates of the left in the preceding decades the acknowledgement that the Brazilian economy was already fully capitalist. Stating that 'the conquest of socialism and the construction of a socialist society in Brazil are the overriding strategic objectives of the PT', the programme presented what it considered to be an appropriate class front to carry forward the necessary transformations, an alliance between rural workers and workers in the cities, but also emphasizing the participation of the petit bourgeoisie, which it defined as 'small and micro-urban and rural businessmen' who, it felt, would nurse 'profound contradictions with capitalism'.⁶ In that respect the guidelines for possible party political alliances determined that, in principle, they would not involve bourgeois parties.

3 A. Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 13.

4 Ibid., 24.

5 Partido dos Trabalhadores, 'V Encontro Nacional (Resoluções políticas)', 1987. All National Meetings' resolutions can be found at <https://fpabramo.org.br/csbh/encontros-nacionais-do-pt-resolucoes>, last accessed August 2020.

6 Ibid.

Regarding the classic debate on the alternatives of reform or revolution, the PT expressed a non-excluding concept that viewed the struggle for reforms as part of the 'accumulation of forces' that was necessary in a context in which re-democratization had not yet been consolidated and valued its 'educational' role for the masses, given that such struggles could demonstrate that 'consolidation, even of those reforms already achieved, is possible only when workers establish their own power, so it serves the ends of the fight for social transformations and should be combined with it'.⁷ It is not by chance that the item referring to 'Tactics' makes a synthesis of the objectives of the PDP as being:

The struggle for hegemony in Brazilian society, based on a Popular-Democratic programme capable of politically unifying the workers and achieving the adherence of the urban and rural middle-class sectors. That programme must not only synthesize our opposition to the New Republic and the conservative transition but also show the way towards the socialist reorganization of our society.⁸

To that end, the popular democratic strategy, 'based on the acknowledgement that neither the struggle to take power nor the direct struggle for socialism is on the order of the day', centred on the conquest of 're-democratization', along a forked route: parting from 'civil society' by means of mobilizations of the social movements pressuring for the conquest of new rights and stemming from the expanded occupation of institutional spaces within the state. That document of 1987 expressed it in these terms:

The policy of accumulating forces presupposes that the PT will carry out three central activities:

- (a) its own independent and mass organization as a socialist political force;
- (b) the construction of the CUT by means of a classist labour movement, combative and of the masses;
- (c) the occupation of institutional spaces in elections.⁹

In time it was to become increasingly clear how the PT, in its popular-democratic strategy design, had vastly overrated the electoral flank of the pincer movement it envisaged (the combination of 'external' pressure stemming from the movements and pressure from within the state itself). In the 1990s, both the PT's electoral progress and the evident decline of the

7 Ibid. 8 Ibid. 9 Ibid.

confrontational character of the trade unions confederated in the CUT contributed to that situation. However, the way the party perceived the crises in the east European regimes and the subsequent capitalist restoration in those nations also played a role.

Growth amid Retraction

During its first congress (formerly the broad deliberative forums were called National Meetings) in 1991, the PT took up the strategic debate once more and reiterated its affirmation as a socialist party by means of a double negation: 'PT socialism' was said to be 'neither actually existing socialism, nor social democracy'. Nevertheless, the positive affirmation of that PT socialist project was replaced in the congressional texts by the expression 'dispute of hegemony', which in practice was understood as an expansion of the spaces occupied in the institutional sphere. That would be a pathway to an expansion of citizenship, taken to be a deepening of democracy, and that was converted into a strategic objective by means of a play on words: 'for the PT, socialism is synonymous with the radicalization of democracy'.¹⁰

In the decade that followed that congress those concepts were reflected in institutional policies and in the way that the party defined the 'PT way of governing'. In the 1980s, the idea of an alternative way of governing was associated with slogans such as 'inversion of priorities'. In the 1990s, however, it would increasingly come to mean 'governing for all'; both slogans could be found in electoral propaganda by the party. In the resolutions of the 6th National Meeting in 1993, the term 'socialism' was still present, but what was actually being discussed was advancing in the direction of 'true substantive democracy'. The formerly affirmed relationship between reform and revolution appeared to remain at an increasing distance in the past, as there was no longer any mention of the contradiction between reforms and the capitalist order/bourgeois domination: 'because we fight for reforms and for democratization in the State and in society; we believe the success of this fight depends on action of the people and of government in the sense of stretching and fraying the limits of the existing order'.¹¹

¹⁰ '1 Congresso do Partido dos Trabalhadores', in Partido dos Trabalhadores, *Resoluções de Encontros e Congressos* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 1998), pp. 482–3, 499–500.

¹¹ Partido dos Trabalhadores, 'VIII Encontro Nacional (Por um governo democrático popular)', 1993, available at <https://fpabramo.org.br/csbh/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/04/04-porungovernodemocratico.pdf>, last accessed August 2020.

Indeed, the PT was very successful in expanding the votes it received and in occupying space in the state apparatus. In the elections for the new National Congress in 1990, the PT raised the number of its representatives in the House from sixteen to thirty-five and elected its first senator. In 1992, the party took an active part in the grassroots mobilizations that followed the denunciation of corruption in the Collor Government, calling for the impeachment of the president. Collor was removed in September 1992.

In the municipal elections of 1992, the PT lost the contest for the city halls of Vitória and São Paulo but managed to elect Olívio Dutra's successor (Tarso Genro) in Porto Alegre and elect the mayors of two other state capitals: Belo Horizonte and Goiânia. The state of Rio Grande do Sul was destined to become the great laboratory for the 'PT way of governing'¹² as well as its showcase. It was in Porto Alegre that PT governments hosted five assemblies of the World Social Forum from 2001 to 2005, attracting the attention and the representations of left-wing organizations and social movements from around the world to that city. The state of Rio Grande do Sul itself was governed by the PT, which had conquered that position in 1998 as it had done in two other states of the Brazilian Federation (in 1994 the PT had elected the governors of one state and of the federal district).

In 1994 and 1998, Lula ran for president and polled the second-largest number of votes, but he lost both those elections in the first round of voting to Fernando Henrique Cardoso from the PSDB. The presidential campaign of 1994 was conditioned by the effects of the Plano Real, the plan designed to stabilize the economy launched at the end of 1993 by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, then minister of finance of the Itamar Franco administration. The Plan guaranteed monetary stability, and the positive effects of that were the curbing of inflation and a slight improvement in the purchasing power of low-income workers.

The prestige that came with the Plan's success was the main reason behind Fernando Henrique Cardoso's re-election in 1998. However, the effort to artificially sustain the Brazilian currency in parity with the dollar, which had permitted that re-election, became impossible in the period that followed, and Brazil once again faced a deep economic recession and had to submit to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreements.

In the field of economic policy, the administrations of Fernando Henrique Cardoso left behind the slightly social democratic discourse that accompanied

12 T. Genro et al., *Governo e cidadania. Balanço e reflexões sobre o modo petista de governar* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 1999).

the origins of the PSDB and carried on the privatization policies started by the Collor administration, following the new liberal agenda with reforms to the young constitution that suppressed some of the labour and social security rights for which it had provided. By the end of the 1990s, such policies had generated high unemployment and the growth of extreme poverty in various Latin American countries, causing considerable erosion of social support for the neo-liberal governments. It was no different in Brazil, and in 2002 Lula came forward for the fourth time to run for the presidency, but this time with a real chance of victory.

Certain important differences in the 2002 campaign in comparison with the previous ones are readily perceptible. While ever since 1994 Lula had defended expanding the range of alliances around the PT candidature to other centre-left forces, in 2002, the expansion involved the entrance of the Liberal Party (Partido Liberal, PL) in the electoral support front established for Lula's candidature. The PL had always been a defender of the ideas associated with economic liberalism and had been a severe critic of the PT on several occasions. It had also become associated with the evangelical parliamentary groups in the National Congress, particularly those of the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God). What was most significant, however, was that the alliance with the PL led to the candidature for the vice presidency of José Alencar, an important businessman in the textiles industry, who contributed to the image of the campaign as a reconciliation between workers and corporate business, and that was an important factor in enabling Lula to overcome barriers that he had experienced in previous elections regarding corporate support for his candidature.

The campaign programme was structured along two axes. On one side, there was the criticism of the social consequences of the neoliberal policies of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's two terms in office and proposals for putting into effect broad social programmes to fight hunger and unemployment. On the other side, there was the commitment to maintaining monetary stability and control of inflation which was expressed in the political slogan 'not one contract will be broken'.

In the second round of the election Lula achieved 61.27 per cent of the valid votes and so he became the first ever worker to be elected president of Brazil.

In Office. In Power?

Finally, after running for three previous elections, Lula was elected president of the republic and the PT held the presidential chair for the next thirteen

years (with Lula re-elected in 2006 and Dilma Rousseff in 2010 and 2014, the first woman elected president in Brazilian history). Supported by a protest vote against the social disaster resulting from more than a decade of neo-liberal governments, the arrival of the PT to the federal government generated the expectation of a reformist management along the lines of traditional social democratic logic. However, the PT ruled at a time when sections of European social democracy had already abandoned the welfare state perspective in the name of a 'Third Way' social liberalism.¹³ Locally it looked for broad alliances, including sectors of big capital, which were not willing to make large concessions. Thus, PT governments can be characterized by a new kind of reformism – limited to social assistance which, despite having a large impact, was still far from the principles of universal social rights – in which focused social policies that have removed tens of millions of Brazilian men and women from extreme poverty were combined with the continuity of orthodox economic management, with high interest rates, privatizations, and state incentives to large private companies in the country.

Thus, the negative expectations regarding the Lula Government on the part of investors were dispelled even before he took office as, one by one, he announced the names of his ministers. The central core of the administration was occupied by politicians of the PT itself. The most surprising name of all, however, and one that made it crystal clear that all the contracts would indeed be honoured, was that of Henrique Meirelles as the new president of the Central Bank. Meirelles had just been elected as federal representative for the state of Goiás on a PSDB ticket and had previously occupied the position of CEO at the Bank of Boston, one of the main creditors of Brazil's external debt. Other names announced were linked to big corporations and the export sector centred on agribusiness and the production of commodities.

The inauguration ceremony took place on 1 January 2003, with a huge popular celebration in Brasília that brought together 70,000 people into the streets of the federal capital. In his speech on taking office in the Congress building Lula invoked the terms hope and change: "Change", that is the key word, that was the great message of Brazilian society in the October elections. Hope has finally triumphed over fear and Brazilian society has decided that it is high time to tread new paths.¹⁴ In his speech to the crowd gathered

¹³ A. Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

¹⁴ M. B. Mattos and L. Pinheiro, 'Lula', in C. J. de Paula and F. Lattman-Weltman (eds.), *Dicionário Histórico-Biográfico Brasileiro*, available at www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-biografico/luiz-inacio-da-silva, last accessed August 2020.

in the Esplanade of the Ministries he called for a great national mobilization to put an end to hunger in the country.

That appeal materialized in the form of the Zero Hunger (*Fome Zero*) programme which sought to guarantee the nutrition of the very poorest sectors of the Brazilian population. During the course of the first few years, the government's social policies evolved to a unification around the main programme, the *Bolsa Família* (Family Allowance). In 2006, that income-complementing policy sought to benefit 11.1 million families, the equivalent of 45 million people (almost a quarter of the Brazilian population at the time).

With regard to economic policy, stability was the priority and the campaign commitment to 'respecting the contracts' was firmly reiterated. One of the government's priorities was to obtain the enactment of a series of constitutional reforms. The first draft proposal presented to the National Congress involved the reform of the social security system, and it dealt mainly with an increase in requirements and setting a limit to civil service pensions; civil servants could, if they wished, have recourse to private pension schemes to complement their official pensions. The government's proposal was endorsed by the Social Economic Development Council, which had representation from businessmen, trade union confederations, and members nominated by the executive. For the government this was a practical representation of the spirit of class conciliation.

The constitutional reforms agenda, especially social security reform, led to a split in the PT. Senator Heloísa Helena refused to vote in favour of it and so did federal representatives Luciana Genro (Rio Grande do Sul), João Batista Oliveira – known as Babá – (Pará) and João Fontes (Sergipe), and they became known as the 'radical' parliamentarians; the result of a deliberation by the party's ethical committee was that they were expelled from the party on 14 December 2003. The group eventually participated in the construction of a new party, the Socialism and Freedom Party (*Partido Socialismo e Liberdade*, PSOL).

The PT could not secure a majority of votes in the National Congress to push through the items on its agenda without seeking the support of a wide base of political parties because it had elected a mere 91 of its members to the 513 seats in the House of Representatives. Against that background it was denounced that, via actions commanded by the top echelons of the government, the PT had been purchasing political support to get its agenda approved and using the resources of left over unregistered campaign funds. The denunciations gave rise to what became known as the '*escândalo do mensalão*' (the big monthly handouts scandal).

On 20 July 2005, a Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry was constituted specifically to investigate the '*mensalão*' scandal, which had been the focus of debates since 2004. The '*mensalão*' committee's inquiries went on until November 2005, and parallel to their efforts there was another committee specifically investigating similar denunciations affecting the State Postal Corporation, and it terminated its activities only in 2006. In the course of the crisis various members of the government were affected: Minister of the Civil Office of the Presidency José Dirceu and the government's main political articulator resigned in June 2005 and took up, once more, his mandate as a federal representative; in the following July Luiz Gushiken withdrew from the Department of Communication and, in the same month, José Genoino resigned from the presidency of the PT.

President Lula denied any knowledge of the facts that appeared in the denunciations and investigations and classified them as 'unacceptable practices'. He made a speech to the nation on 12 August 2005 in which he declared 'I am not ashamed to apologize to the Brazilian people. The PT must apologize. The government, when it has made mistakes, must apologize.'¹⁵ In spite of the '*mensalão*' scandal's strong repercussions, the president's popularity was not substantially affected.

In the following presidential campaign, the '*mensalão*' came up again in the debates, but it was evident that most voters did not associate the denunciations with the figure of Lula. In the end, the campaign's central theme was the government's social policies, which were so strongly approved of that the opposition found itself obliged to commit itself to maintaining them, especially the Bolsa Família programme.

Lula was elected in the second round of the elections with over 60 per cent of the votes cast and once again José Alencar was his vice presidential candidate. The defeated candidate was once more a PSDB politician, but this time it was the erstwhile governor of São Paulo state, Geraldo Alkmin. The increase in the votes for the party as a whole mirrored the second presidential victory. In 2002, the PT had managed to elect three state governors, but in 2006 it elected five. However, the group of its parliamentarians in the House lost eight seats as only eighty-three PT representatives were elected (15 per cent of the total), but in the Senate the number went up to ten (19 per cent of the total).

That maintenance of high popularity figures and the final result of the 2006 elections, mostly attributable to the success of the compensatory social

¹⁵ Mattos and Pinheiro, 'Lula'.

policies, did not reflect the mere fidelity of Lula's original electorate. Lula's overwhelming victory in the north-east region of Brazil and his majorities in the voting of the smaller municipalities, in contrast to the advantages obtained in previous elections in the south-east and in Brazil's more populous cities, could be considered the clearest indicator of the change in the profile of Lula's electorate, and to a lesser extent, that of the PT.

In its second mandate in the presidency of the republic, the PT would have to face the global capitalist crisis that erupted in 2008 and whose most severe impacts were restricted, at first, to 2009 when there was a recession and a drop of 0.13 per cent in Brazilian GDP. In 2010, the Brazilian economy began to grow again at a rate of 7.53 per cent in the nominal GDP compared with the preceding year. The maintenance of the purchasing power of the lowest salaries through the elevation of the real value of the minimum salary and the continuation of assistance programmes, together with the expansion of credit offer, played a strong role in that recovery. Government investment programmes were also important, especially in the areas of housing and infrastructure. In the field of international trade, a change that had been experienced in earlier years played a decisive role. China had become Brazil's leading trading partner and its demand ensured the maintenance of high levels of Brazilian exports of agricultural commodities, iron ore, and fuels.

The relative success of the Brazilian economy in an adverse international scenario is the main explanation as to how, in 2010, Lula managed to elect his successor, a minister of state whose first electoral experience in her life would be in a dispute for the presidency of the republic.

Dilma Rousseff was elected in the second round of the election with 56 per cent of the votes, defeating, once more, the PSDB candidate, José Serra. The party was able to hold on to five state governments and improve the number of its representatives in the House to eighty-eight, while in the Senate its group increased to a total of fifteen seats.

The End of the Cycle

Dilma Rousseff was destined to be re-elected in 2014 after once more running against a candidate of the PSDB, but this time it was Aécio Neves and she won by a much smaller margin, less than 52 per cent of the votes. However, the president would not complete her second mandate, and in 2016 she was replaced by the vice president after suffering an impeachment process based on unsubstantiated accusations of manipulating the accounts in the execution of the federal budget. The machinations to overthrow her involved politicians

who, up until a short time before, had been part of the government's support base in Congress (among them the vice president himself), and they received support from the media and from street demonstrations by sectors of the middle class. They were also articulated with a legal process investigating denunciations of corruption in Petrobras (the state oil company) – the 'Operação Lava Jato' (Operation Car Wash) – and the main corporative entities in the country declared their support for the process. Although it resulted from an impeachment process conducted according to rules provided for in the Brazilian constitution, the political debate of the time and various academic analysts assessed Dilma's overthrow as being a *coup d'état*, given the fragile nature of the accusations and the speed with which the entire process was conducted by the chairman of the House of Representatives, who was himself arrested months later and convicted of corruption.¹⁶

To explain the coup against the PT government it is necessary to understand the relatively quick change that came about in the positions of those social actors that sustained it; and the changes occurred from the lowest echelons to the highest. The year 2013 was a milestone in that respect. In June 2013, when the Confederations Cup (the preparatory tournament for the FIFA World Cup in the following year) was in full swing, street demonstrations broke out simultaneously all over Brazil, and millions of people came out onto the streets in the second fortnight of that month.

On the one hand, the so-called June Days were evidence of the emergence of grassroots demands for improvements in public services and, on the other, they were the first steps of the occupation of spaces by an organized sector of the far right which publicly presented itself as demanding the extirpation of corruption. Going a little beyond the appearances of the events and despite the diversity of the protests, including some with a clear reactionary purpose, it is easy to identify the main demands of the demonstrations that developed throughout the process. They included calls for a reduction in the price of public transport and the improvement of its quality, an end to police violence and corporate media control, and the preservation of public education and healthcare – all of which possess a clear class profile. This involved the interests of the wider working class that demanded, albeit in a diffuse form, not just consumer access to the market, which PT governments were presenting as their way to citizenship, but universal social rights.¹⁷

16 L. F. Miguel, *O colapso da democracia no Brasil. Da constituição ao golpe de 2016* (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2016).

17 M. B. Mattos, 'New and old forms of social movements: a discussion from Brazil', *Critique* 43, 3–4 (2015), pp. 485–99.

If the June Days represented a blow to the support of some sectors of the working class for the PT government, this event was also accompanied by the distancing of some fractions of the dominant class from the same government. This came about as the mass demonstrations showed that the government was no longer efficient in bringing about what it had promised (and which it had managed to do in the preceding years), which was social peace based on the logic of class conciliation.

As the effect of the compensatory factors, like the vigorous trade flow with China and the measures taken to stimulate the domestic market, that had managed to contain the economic crisis from 2010 to 2014 gradually began to wear off and, from 2014 on, the economic indicators began their trajectory of descent, it became clear that the economic crisis was to have its most profound effects in the period to come. The worsening economic crisis in the presidential election year of 2014 made it very difficult for Dilma to get re-elected. There was a notable drop in votes cast for the PT in industrialized areas of the south-east that had traditionally supported the party. After winning by a very thin margin an election in which she had recourse to a far more radical discourse of social commitment to grassroots interests, Dilma Rousseff began her second mandate by abandoning those election campaign appeals and endeavouring to respond to pressure from the ruling classes by acceding to an economic agenda embracing austerity. Although Dilma brought in a CEO from the largest private bank as her finance minister and began her second term by cutting pensions and unemployment benefits, throughout 2015 various fractions of the bourgeoisie seem to have surmised that the PT was no longer capable of ensuring social peace and/or of carrying forward its latter-day agenda in the rhythm and depth that were required. So, in the course of 2015 and the first months of 2016, bourgeois support grew for anti-corruption and anti-government demonstrations, called and organized by new right-wing organizations.¹⁸

The anti-corruption and anti-Dilma Rousseff demonstrations were basically carried out by the petit bourgeoisie and sectors of the middle class. The repercussions of the economic crisis had been perceived first by the sectors with higher salaries or small businesses, which had been more heavily taxed in the previous years. This middle class also seemed to consider that the increase in the consumption power of the lower-waged sector of the working class, during the PT governments, was something that they had paid for. The

18 F. H. C. Casimiro, *A nova direita. Aparelhos de ação política e ideológica no Brasil contemporâneo* (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2018).

protests played an important role in the process of Dilma's impeachment, which was confirmed in August 2016.

The class composition – higher-salaried middle-class and small- and medium-sized business owners – and regional distribution (mainly in the south and south-east regions of Brazil) of the 2015/16 wave of protests were basically the same as those that were to form the main electoral basis for the extreme right candidate Jair Bolsonaro in the 2018 elections.

If Bolsonaro was to make it to the presidency, however, it was necessary to complete the coup against the PT. In the first months of 2018 all the electoral opinion polls showed that Lula was the candidate with the highest percentage of intentions to vote, far ahead of any other contender. Given the threat of that worker/politician being re-elected to the presidency, the legal processes that associated Lula with the corruption in Petrobras (Operation Car Wash) were accelerated and, although the evidence was extremely tenuous, the ex-president was condemned, imprisoned, and effectively impeded from participating in the elections.

It continues to be a challenge to interpret the trajectory of the Workers' Party from its origins amid the strikes in the latter days of the military dictatorship through the more than thirteen years that it exercised the presidency of the republic and culminating with the coup against Dilma and Lula's imprisonment (currently at liberty) and the diffusion of a strong anti-PT sentiment that associates the party with corruption. To meet that challenge, it is necessary first to acknowledge that the PT continues to be a force to be reckoned with in the Brazilian party political spectrum. As at 2020, it governed four Brazilian states, and it had a congressional corps of fifty-six federal representatives and six senators. PT militants run the CUT and many other social movements. Nevertheless, while it was in government, the party used its presence in the social movements more with the intention of curbing social struggles than of boosting them as instruments to exert pressure on the institutional sphere of the state and push forward substantive reforms as its strategic programme in the late 1980s had proposed.

It was so active in controlling mobilizations that when it eventually needed support to avoid the coup of 2016, the movements that were run by the PT did not have sufficient force or did not know how to mobilize to face up to the right-wing demonstrations and avoid Dilma's deposal. On the other hand, when in office the party abdicated from its radical reforms programme, seeking instead to ensure 'governability' by the traditional mechanisms of constructing a majority in the parliament by co-opting parties of varied ideological spectra with offers of positions in the executive branch and the

chance to administer budget funds, thereby keeping open the channels of corruption that have always permeated the Brazilian state. Without promoting substantive reforms and curbing rather than boosting social struggles, the PT governed with a programme that was not its own and served the interests of classes far removed from its original social bases. When all is said and done, perhaps the simplest conclusion that can be drawn from the process that culminated with Dilma's impeachment and was completed with Lula's imprisonment is that, after more than a decade in office, the PT governed, yes, but it was never in power. As for the PT's future, it remains to be seen whether, one day, the party's leaders will come to the same conclusion, or even if it really matters to them. In any event, a possible reorganization of the working-class movement and of those political organizations that still raise the banner of socialism in Brazil cannot yet dispense with the weight and principally the historical experience of that 'late example of a classic mass socialist Labour Party' (Hobsbawm) which has been the most important socialist party in Brazilian political history.

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A Persistent Whisper: The Social Democratic Idea in US History

LEON FINK

The history of social democracy is likely an elusive, shape-shifting subject in every country but surely nowhere more so than in the United States. Except for a brief period (1900–20) when the Socialist Party of America – itself a diverse factional coalition – commanded at least minor attention on the national stage and again in recent years (2016–20) when Senator Bernie Sanders sallied forth as a ‘democratic socialist’ presidential candidate, no self-identified social democratic movement has much claim on our historical curiosity. Merely to stick within such obvious precincts, however, would likely reproduce a narrow rehash of factional politics (already covered by a competent specialized historiography) probably of as little interest to the readers of this volume as to its author. If we look below the surface, however, at the essence, rather than the form, of the matter, we will see that something akin to the social democratic idea as centred in Europe has also long inhabited American politics and political culture, at times with quite significant, if never yet triumphant, effect. To explore that narrative, however, requires a brief conceptual and comparative–historical sojourn, which, if somewhat arbitrary, is the only way to write what many still see as a foreign term into the heart of the American political tradition.

Social democracy, by this reading, is best identified with the vector of ‘revisionism’ galvanized within the German SPD by Eduard Bernstein in 1906 that constituted something of a rewriting of the principles of the German movement associated with Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle. We might thus define it as an enduring attempt to ‘tame’ (if not necessarily transcend) capitalism, by surrounding it with a variety of politically democratic and economically redistributive safeguards. Its distinctive message, notwithstanding significant shifts in doctrine and continuous conflicts over party

programme and strategy, was early sounded by the Lassalle-led General German Workers' Association in 1863 in attacking the 'night-watchman theory of the state', effectively dismissing the 'iron law of wages' and rather insisting that economic laws are not natural but historical.¹ Notably, what would become the incubus of the German social democrats, the most powerful socialist party in Europe, initially took ideological flight in the 1875 Gotha Programme as a critique of middle-class individualism that fixed on demands for universal suffrage and state support for co-operative industries.² By the turn of the century – following eclipse by Bismarck's dissolution of the Reichstag and proscription of socialist office holders – the earlier Lassallean equation of socialism with robust economic democracy returned as Bernsteinian 'social democracy', or socialism clipped of revolutionism. For Bernstein and the reformist socialists who would champion twentieth-century social democracy, the Marxist analysis of inevitable class conflict or 'barricade rhetoric' exaggerated structural contradictions at the expense of more incremental but real political opportunities for expanding democratic empowerment.³ The effect of the revisionist critique was also to blur a boundary that had rhetorically separated 'scientific' socialism from its 'utopian' or 'petit bourgeois' ideological competitors. All the more reason, then, in acting on the revisionist assumption, to reassemble the legacy of social democracy on multiple foundations of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century radicalisms.

Farmer–Labour Populism

By such lights, as we will demonstrate here, the social democratic current not only secured a persistent foothold but figured in several transformative moments in US political history. Following his 1886 trip to the United States with Eleanor Marx in the midst of eight-hour strikes and the New York City mayoral campaign of anti-monopoly candidate Henry George, it was Engels himself who had waxed euphoric. Whereas it had taken 'years and years' for European workers to develop a sense of themselves as a class and 'years more' to form themselves into a distinct political party, 'on the more favoured soil of America, where no medieval ruins bar

- 1 G. Brandes, *Ferdinand Lassalle* (New York: Bernard G. Richards, 1925 [1875]), pp. 125–6, 170; E. Bernstein, *Ferdinand Lassalle as a Social Reformer*, trans. E. Marx-Aveling (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969 [1893]), p. 12.
- 2 Brandes, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. v; Bernstein, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 104; G. Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making: Political and Religious Roots of European Socialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 116.
- 3 Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making*, pp. 167–8.

the way, where history begins with the elements of the modern bourgeois society as evolved in the seventeenth century, the working class', it seemed to Engels, 'passed through these two stages of its development within ten months.'⁴ To be sure, neither Engels' hopes nor those of his American labour hosts would come to fruition. Still, he was surely onto something. In fact, he had witnessed the heyday of an anti-monopoly, populist movement that had sprouted in the 1870s and stretched powerfully into the 1890s, congealing most powerfully around farmers in the National Grange, National Farmers' Alliance, and Colored Farmers' Alliance; workers in the Knights of Labor; and a cross-class political alliance encompassing the Greenback-Labor Party, Workingmen's municipal tickets, and People's Party electoral initiatives. Together, these developments fairly composed a credible political alternative to corporate capitalism or what we might call the first chapter in American social democracy.

Outfitted in different organizational forms, the intellectual skeleton of anti-capitalist resistance was shared across the period. As the historian Charles Postel has demonstrated, the farmers' Grange (or more formally the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry) – as led by peripatetic farmer, lawyer, journalist, and land agent Oliver Kelly and horticulturalist William Saunders – first set the anti-monopoly mould beginning in 1867 with a combination of fraternal sociality, producer and consumer co-operatives, and a legislative attack on railroads and corporations. Drawing on Masonic rituals, Grangers developed an elaborate system of handshakes and ceremonies, while also beckoning to women's rights advocates with a 'separate but equal' range of rituals and offices, extending active membership, and leadership in the form of lectureships, to women as well as men. By the mid-1870s, 860,000 men and women composed 21,000 local Granges in every state in the Union. As families of corn, cotton, and wheat farmers (both dirt farmers and large land-owners, but generally ignoring tenants and hired labourers), they were also all white. Determined to rebuild agrarian prospects after the devastation of the Civil War, the Grange relied on both racial (and racist) solidarity to fend off both northern commercial capital and racial Reconstruction. To elevate the farmer class, they embraced ambitious public education plans (again white children only) and co-operative projects, including stores and cotton gins.⁵

4 Quoted in L. Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 6.

5 C. Postel, *Equality: An American Dilemma, 1866–1896* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2019), pp. 17–47, 70, 80.

If the attempt to renew the economy and vitality of post-Civil War agrarian communities provided one wedge of the Grange (and a broader-based, emergent 'populist' politics), hostility to an increasingly monopolistic commercial order centred on the railroads provided the other. For many ordinary Americans, the speculative disorder of late nineteenth-century American railroads defined the very evil of 'monopoly'. Initially chartered by a legislative franchise granting a private company 'exclusive privileges' within a given market, arbitrary railroad rates and access, both usually benefiting the largest shippers, railroads came to have life and death power over the survival of local farm economies. The Grange and its agrarian successors of the 1880s, the National Farmers' Alliance and separate Colored Farmers' Alliance – both with roots in rural Texas – responded with a vigorous counterattack. Across the Midwest, 'granger' legislation established railway commissions and state-controlled grain elevators to enforce uniform rates for users, while defining discriminatory rates as criminal extortion.⁶

Just as Granger–Alliance forces tapped anti-monopoly sentiment, the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor proved to be an effective receptacle for the accumulating fears and grievances of workers across towns and cities of Gilded Age America. Originally formed as a secret society among skilled garment workers in Philadelphia in 1869, the Knights proved part fraternal order, part powerful labour union, and part social democratic political movement. With an appeal for solidarity – 'An injury to one is the concern of all' – and social unity (including women and African-Americans but excluding Chinese immigrants), the Knights under the leadership of General Master Workman Terence Powderly, a former railroad machinist from Scranton, Pennsylvania, organized nearly one million members by the mid-1880s in local and district assemblies across the country to rescue those it called the 'producing classes' 'from the recent alarming development and aggression of aggregated wealth'.⁷ While first investing their hopes in producer co-operatives as alternatives to the wage system as well as 'arbitration' or negotiation of differences with employers, the Knights soon faced Herculean class struggles across the nation's mines, railroads, and industrial centres. Together this was the moment that so intrigued Engels during his American visit. Yet some of the very strengths of the Knights of Labor as a social movement were also the source of its

6 Postel, *Equality*, pp. 56–69.

7 L. Fink, *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*, 2nd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), p. 24.

greatest weaknesses. Community-level organization proved to be feckless in combatting national corporations, and on the industrial front only nationally integrated, skilled craft unions, who loosely joined together in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1886, proved capable of surviving the Great Upheaval of the Gilded Age.

The rural and urban wings of the farmer-labor revolt ultimately and almost inevitably merged into political mobilization. In 1886–7, Workingmen's municipal tickets in Knights of Labor strongholds attempted to legislate shorter hours, expand access to schools and libraries, and maintain local control of the police power.⁸ The farmers' movement soon went further in the use of the state. Effectively radicalizing the programme and strategy of the Grange, a joint meeting of the south-eastern and western divisions of the Alliance, meeting in St Louis, adopted a platform that included the nationalization of the railroads, replacement of national banks by a system of guaranteed government credit, abolition of big landholding companies, and a graduated income tax. Challenging the power of private banks, its most innovative feature was the 'subtreasury' plan championed by Alliance leader Charles Macune, whereby government warehouses would store crops until prices climbed to appreciable levels, while in the meantime farmers would survive on low-interest state loans. Unsurprisingly assailed by a mixture of 'hard money' financial, manufacturing, and railroad interests, the Alliance challenged the stranglehold of the nation's two-party system over the labouring classes by forming the People's Party (quickly known as the Populists) in Omaha in 1892. In apocalyptic, near-revolutionary tones, the Omaha platform demanded dramatic social and economic change in the form of unprecedented government and pro-labour intervention:

We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin . . . The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of those, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty . . . The time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads . . . We believe that the power of government – in other words, of the people – should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.

8 See Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, pp. 18–37.

In a direct appeal to its urban labour allies, the platform also demanded protection for the right to organize, a shortening of working hours, and abolition of the notoriously anti-union Pinkerton private police force.⁹

Likely the most powerful movement that ever attempted to change the American political and economic system in a democratic direction, the Populists won more than a million votes in their first outing in 1892 (and half a million more two years later) and elected governors in Kansas and Colorado. Ultimately, however, they could not break the hegemony of the two-party system over voter loyalties. In 1896, when they endorsed Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan, who had selectively adopted a Populist, inflationary call for free silver, they effectively proved themselves spent as an independent political force.¹⁰

The Socialist Party of America

The next noteworthy chapter in American social democratic politics centres on the Socialist Party of America in the two decades preceding US entry into the First World War in 1918. While picking up the pieces of the Knights' broader class-wide appeals and the Populist penchant for turning workplace and community grievance into a political campaign against centres of wealth and power, the Socialist Party melded the radical edge of these home-grown movements into an already well-established European socialist tradition, centred on a Marxist-derived critique of capitalism that nevertheless connected its adherents to a host of competing strategic scenarios for remaking the world. However fraught with internal division and contradiction, the socialist message placed the idea of worker power at the top of its agenda. It also emboldened its followers with a heady internationalism, an assumption that workers the world over were co-operating in a common endeavour to replace production for profit with a social system more geared to human needs.

From its founding convention in January 1901, the SPA – initially an amalgam of already-established socialist factions, old populists, and the remnant of the American Railway Union whose leader, Eugene Victor Debs, had only recently completed a prison term dating from the tumultuous Pullman railway strike and boycott of 1894 – regularly attempted to square its

9 Excerpts from the Populist Party Omaha Platform, 1892, available at <https://resources.billofrightsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GA-003-HandoutE.pdf>, last accessed 25 January 2021.

10 R. Rosenzweig and N. Lichtenstein, *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's History*, vol. 11, 3rd edn (New York: St Martin's Press, 2008), pp. 139–43.

positions with those of its European partners, especially the German Social Democratic Party, whose official or 'orthodox' strategy was principally guided by Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Kautsky, and August Bebel. The orthodox position (defended in the United States by New York City leader Morris Hillquit, by Pennsylvania labour chief James H. Maurer, and at least initially by five-time party standard-bearer Debs) posited a *political* path to socialist transformation, based on winning over both the labour movement and the voting public to a programme of radical institutional change, at which point the socialist majority would assume control of both the political and, via nationalization, the economic levers of power. In the meantime (i.e., prior to electoral majority), the advance of reform demands was to serve mainly as an *educational* tool, not a transitional path to power. This latter point was dutifully taken up by the American party: indeed, national party officials broke up incipient attempts (even expelling offending locals) that tried to co-operate with populists or create broader 'labour party' formations.¹¹

Challenging such orthodoxy and self-consciously in step with Germany's Bernsteinian revisionism was the 'constructive socialism' or incrementalist strategy championed by the SPA's Milwaukee leader, the Austrian-born school-teacher Victor Berger. As editor of the local party newspaper, the *Vorwärts*, Berger declared, 'Nothing more ought to be demanded than is attainable at a given time and under given circumstances.' With strong support from the city's heavily German-American craft unionists, who, although officially aligned with the determinedly 'non-political' American Federation of Labor (AFL), effectively formed an 'interlocking directorate' with the Milwaukee party, Berger quickly built a powerful local political machine, electing Emil Seidel mayor and Berger himself to the US Congress in 1910 – victories that laid the groundwork for the extended administration of socialist Mayor Daniel Hoan, 1916–40. In office the Milwaukee social democrats combined a record of clean government with an expansion of public services: their legacy included the nation's first public housing project as well as a series of public parks and a municipal water and sewage system. If the city of Milwaukee represented the highpoint of municipal socialism, some 2,000 local office holders – concentrated in such disconnected centres as Schenectady, New York, Reading, Pennsylvania, Canton, Ohio, and Antlers, Oklahoma – suggested it had many would-be imitators.¹²

11 I. Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897–1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 125–7; D. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America: A History* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 16–17.

12 Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, pp. 205–11; L. Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of

To be sure, left-wing critics sometimes derided such reform-minded incrementalism as ‘slowcialism’ or ‘sewer socialism’, notwithstanding the fact that such efforts actually appealed to many working-class families for whom such basic infrastructure affected the quality of daily life. Alas, if perhaps no social visionary, Berger’s biggest limitations as a socialist leader likely lay elsewhere: his political universe was defined by skilled, white, north European workers, with little room for black workers or even the Polish and other Slavic immigrants who increasingly filled the ranks of the city’s semi-skilled labouring positions.¹³ Moreover, while generally adopting a policy towards the inward-turned AFL of ‘boring from within’, the SPA had no ready instrument by which to mobilize a broader industrial working-class base.

Outside pragmatic, municipal voting blocs associated with Bergerism, the SPA – at its peak in 1912 with 6 per cent of the national presidential electorate – drew sustenance from several other political-cultural quarters that deserve at least brief mention. Undoubtedly, the areas of strongest socialist electoral presence were best explained by the prior tracks of populist influence. The south-west proved the ‘reddest’ region in the country and the state of Oklahoma the highest percentage vote-getter outside a few assembly districts in New York City. The party’s most popular organ, by far, was *The Appeal to Reason*, an eclectic compilation of news and ‘one hoss philosophy’ prepared by its editor J. A. Wayland, in Girard, Kansas.¹⁴ Among the regular features of the socialist ‘encampments’ on the Southern Plains, Bavarian-born Oklahoma organizer Oscar Ameringer would later remember the ‘Socialist songs, usually of Populist origin’ but with familiar melodies like ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’.¹⁵

As the gospel tunes Ameringer heard suggested, here-and-now activism combined with other-worldly dreams among Christian socialists. Perhaps best known for its First World War-inspired pacifist cadre (including Presbyterian minister and future presidential standard bearer Norman Thomas), ‘Christian socialism’ proved a powerful nesting place within the broader movement dating from the late nineteenth century. It was a tendency

Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 86–9; M. Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (New York: Random House, 2011), pp. 120–2; Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*, pp. 421–2.

13 S. M. Miller, *Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism, 1910–1920* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1973), p. 28.

14 Fink, *Long Gilded Age*, pp. 131–2; see also J. R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895–1943* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); E. Shore, *Talkin’ Socialism: J. A. Wayland and the Role of the Press in American Radicalism, 1890–1912* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

15 Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, p. 157.

that at once motivated influential theologians like Rochester Theological Seminary's Walter Rauschenbusch (who transformed the values-based Christianity of the nineteenth-century German scholar Albrecht Ritschl to a present-day political imperative) and middle-class youth like Richard T. Ely and Jane Addams, but also through a more vernacular 'socialist Jesus' gospel inspired the party's agrarian rank and file. An announcement for a pamphlet by *Appeal to Reason's* associate editor A. W. Ricker on 'The Political Economy of Jesus' suggests the general tenor of such initiatives:

For more than a thousand years prior to the birth of Jesus, the workers had been organized into Trades Unions, some of which had attained to international strength. At that time the working classes were rebellious and ready for revolt on account of their conditions. Jesus and his followers were a part of the working-class movement, and their first missionary work was chiefly among its members . . . He was crucified by the ruling class because of his economic teachings. The early Christians practiced communism for three hundred years or until [Constantine].¹⁶

The heterogeneity of the American working class by immigrant versus native background, language, and religion often worked against effective political mobilization, but this was not always the case. Two immigrant communities, as Michael Kazin has argued, particularly buttressed the pre-First World War left. Finnish-American socialists effectively transferred the strength of the social democrats in the old country over to the new. A newspaper, consumer co-operatives, and a workers' college – all based in the Finns' Minnesota redoubt – helped to enrol nearly 10 per cent of the Finnish population into the Finnish Socialist Federation, as a semi-independent affiliate of the SPA. Even more significant in terms of their effect on the national movement were the socialist proclivities of Jewish immigrants who fled the ghettos of eastern Europe beginning in the 1880s. Drawing on a Yiddish-language culture thick with newspapers, schools, camps, and bookstores, as well as two Jewish-dominated garment unions, New York City's Lower East Side thrice elected labour attorney Meyer London to the House of Representatives.¹⁷

Two other social groups stood out for their self-conscious presence within the SPA's sometimes fractious ranks. Given the deep connection of both suffrage and broader contemporary feminist demands with the rising employment of

16 For a useful overview, see D. McKanan, 'The implicit religion of radicalism: Socialist Party theology, 1900–1934', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010), pp. 750–89. For an excellent account of cross-over tendencies in the Plains states between Pentecostalism and socialism, see J. Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), pp. 27–51.

17 Kazin, *American Dreamers*, pp. 130–4.

women outside the home, some overlap between the evolving women's rights and socialist movements was surely to be expected. In a now classic treatment, historian Mari Jo Buhle neatly distinguished German-American (and more broadly immigrant) from 'grassroots' (or native American) origins within the developing socialist feminist tradition. In its crudest version, Second International orthodoxy (drawing, in particular, on August Bebel's 1883 *Women and Socialism*) positioned women within a mechanistic march of progress, wherein expanding industrial employment would serve as a progressive wedge to 'lead women out of the narrow sphere of strictly domestic life to a full participation in the public life of the people'.¹⁸ Equally limited in their own way, early native-born activists, rooted in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) initially posited socialism as an extension of 'social purity', defending the family (and traditional gender roles) against ruination by capitalistic industrialization.¹⁹ Before long, however, a new generation of socialist women and some men on both sides of the Atlantic began pressing up against the dual barriers of economic determinism and Victorian morality. At the 1910 Congress of the Second International in Copenhagen, during the Second Conference of Socialist Women (out of which emerged International Women's Day) American delegates joined their sisters in adopting an ambitious agenda: municipal services and educational programmes for women, universal suffrage, lengthy maternity leaves, homes for single pregnant women, at-home obstetric care, day care centres and kindergartens, school-based medical and dental services and lunches, and national health care as well as state pensions for widows.²⁰

In keeping with surrounding white supremacist mores in an age of Jim Crow, the SPA did little to tilt the balance. While a 'class-first' analysis often hid racial animus, even the generally big-hearted and personally anti-racist Debs could not address the systemic discriminations which had held back black empowerment since the termination of Reconstruction. In the circumstances, the efforts of a few individual African-American socialists and intellectuals at best proved a harbinger of the larger social upheaval of a later era. The social scientist, civil rights activist, and later communist champion W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, offered fleeting support for the Socialist

18 Bebel, as quoted in M. J. Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), pp. 27, 180-1.

19 Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, pp. 248-9.

20 S. M. Ward, 'Social Democratic Millennium: Visions of Gender', in P. H. Buckingham (ed.), *Expectations for the Millennium: American Socialist Visions of the Future* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), p. 65.

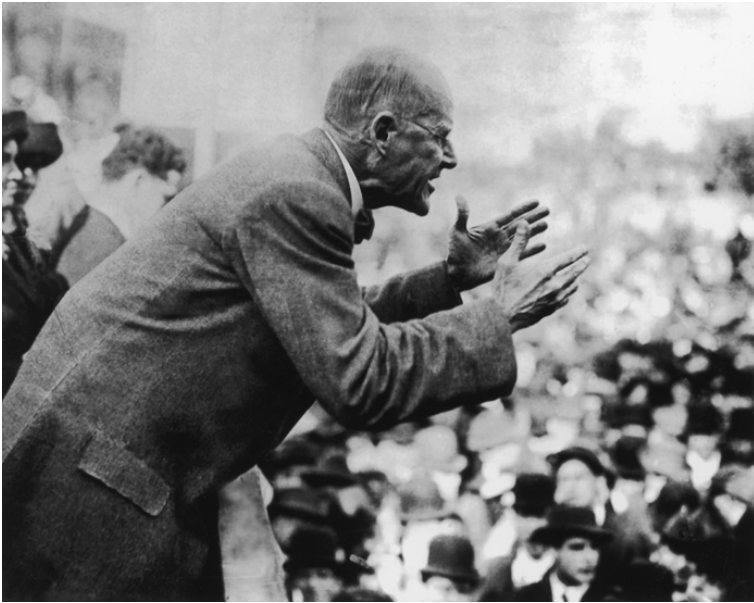


Fig. 10.1 Eugene Debs addresses a crowd of people, c. 1910. (Photograph by Fotosearch/Getty Images.)

Party as he emerged as the dominant voice of the Niagara movement by 1907.²¹ Less formally educated than Du Bois, Hubert Harrison turned to socialism in 1911 and soon became one of the party's few paid African-American organizers. The party attracted Harrison on the basis of its seeming flexibility when it came to organizing marginal constituencies: he hoped (largely in vain as it turned out) to reproduce in the black community a 'special approach' evident in the party's National Woman's Committee and ethnic-based Foreign Language Federations.²² Ultimately, Harrison embraced pan-Africanism, a move soon trumpeted by Du Bois himself as well as the young radicals A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, which suggested that the future political strategies of black radicals would henceforth take their own, independent course.²³

21 D. L. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), pp. 186, 313, 338.

22 J. P. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 4–10, 57, 83–7, 115, 137, 147.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 277, 289–91; J. Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), pp. 43–8, 50–1.

However divided by ethnic, social, gender, or racial background, the variations among socialist persuasions were also determinedly doctrinaire and attached to competing strategic formulations. In virtually lawless western mining and lumber regions and among ever-mobile groups of harvest hands or urban homeless, neither the collective-bargaining strategy of the AFL nor municipal socialism made a meaningful impression. It was among such workers that the revolutionary syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or the Wobblies as they were popularly known) exercised considerable appeal. Joining older radicals like anarchist Lucy Parsons, fire-brand Mother Jones, and sectarian Socialist Labor Party founder Daniel DeLeon with the ecumenical Debs, the militants at the IWW's founding convention in Chicago in 1905 declared themselves the Continental Congress of the Working Class, with a strategy of industrial unionism, unannounced strikes and selective sabotage, and 'class struggle, having in view no compromise and no surrender'.²⁴ Although it likely never topped more than 150,000 members (compared with the AFL's estimated 4,000,000 in 1920) and was effectively destroyed by government repression during the First World War, for many the IWW trumpeted a magnetic alternative to the prevailing imagery of social democracy. Figures like IWW leader 'Big Bill' Haywood, intrepid free-speech advocate Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and songwriter-activist Joe Hill contested the gradualist strategy of the SPA in their day even as their legendary presence resounded for decades in the imagery of no-holds-barred, workplace-centred resistance.²⁵

Unlike most of their European comrades, the ideologically disparate factions of American socialism largely united to oppose US entry (and compulsory conscription) into the First World War. Although initially yielding some electoral gains for the 'peace party', it was a stance for which the left would ultimately pay a heavy price, including extended prison sentences for both Haywood and Debs. In the eyes of the mass-commercial press, wartime resistance coupled with the Russian Revolution tainted all socialists as a threat to the republic. The Palmer raids and legalized crackdown on socialist publications combined with the exit of both pro-war socialists and the Left Opposition into the Communist Party left the SPA in tatters.²⁶

24 Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, p. 33.

25 On the Wobblies, see Fink, *Long Gilded Age*, pp. 127–30; M. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1969), and Kenyon Zimmer, Chapter 19, in Volume I.

26 Kazin, *American Dreamers*, pp. 146–54.

The New Deal Left

The next chapter of American social democracy – stretching from the 1920s to the 1960s – might usefully be labelled the New Deal left. Except for the slim reed of the SPA itself, presided over in much weakened form by Norman Thomas, the tradition often morphs in the hands of recent scholars into ‘new liberalism’, ‘left-liberalism’ – or effectively an updated farmer-labourism: part anti-monopoly, part social welfarism, and ultimately part-Keynesian fiscal national fiscal management.²⁷

To the extent that it forms a viable ideological strand of its own, this twentieth-century strand of social democracy may be said to have begun through its influence on individual intellectuals and activists often broadly grouped in the First World War era as progressives, encompassing journalistic muckrakers, social workers, enlightened businessmen, and child welfare and labour reformers, as well as issue-oriented political activists. Indeed, in 1912, when Theodore Roosevelt’s third-party candidacy formally adopted the Progressive Party label, three of the four candidates (Roosevelt, the Democrat Woodrow Wilson, and the Socialist Debs) openly appealed to the reform constituency. Among early labour progressives, likely the most influential was Sidney Hillman, leader of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers’ Union, who, alongside New York City counterparts like state Senator Robert F. Wagner and National Consumers League activist Frances Perkins, helped to fashion a workers-oriented legislative agenda that prefigured that of the national New Deal. Reform fervour and proto-social democratic policymaking also emerged from the academy, most notably from the ‘bill factory’ presided over by Richard T. Ely and John R. Commons at the University of Wisconsin. Not coincidentally the political expression of the progressive reform surge also emerged from Wisconsin in the career of ‘Fighting Bob’ La Follette, who served variously as Republican governor and US Senator before running as a Progressive (although also with Socialist support) for president and capturing 17 per cent of the popular vote, one of the best third-party performances in US history.²⁸

La Follette’s loss, on top of the near-disappearance of the Socialist Party as an electoral force, discouraged most socialist-minded reformers from tilting

27 See, e.g., D. Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and H. Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

28 Fink, *Major Problems*, pp. 374–5; N. C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

at the wind of further independent, third-party campaigns. By the 1920s, a new immigrant working-class generation, especially Catholics and Jews from eastern and southern Europe, was already effectively being assimilated into the big-city political machines of the Democratic Party. To mobilize them behind a left-wing programme, activists knew, would also require a break from the conservative, *sauve-qui-peut* craft unionism of the AFL. Together, the pragmatic and experimental statecraft of Franklin Roosevelt's four-term New Deal presidency and the radical energy unleashed by the militant organizing campaigns of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) – a set of 'industrial' unions organizing on a plant-wide model who broke away from the AFL in 1935 – set the stage for the fastest and most extensive advance of social democratic measures (although not formally labelled as such) in US history. The left-led political wave that in Europe via socialist–communist collaboration contended under the rubric of the mid-1930s Popular Front was largely contained in the United States within the folds of Roosevelt's so-called New Deal Coalition (albeit, to be sure, with both socialist and communist support).

Ideologically, the New Deal (and subsequent 'War Deal', 1941–5) administration spelled a massively enhanced role for the federal government in the nation's economic affairs. In addition to new federal regulation of the banking and finance industries, the New Deal programmes openly embraced labour union power in the National Labor Relations Act (1935), made the government an employer of last resort with the job-creating Works Progress Administration, for the first time established a significant federal floor for social welfare in the Social Security Act (1935), and even selectively targeted, via the Tennessee Valley Authority, an underdeveloped region for state-directed development. As historians like Steve Fraser have noted, some New Deal 'brain-trusters' like Rexford Tugwell and Henry Wallace openly acknowledged the 'inevitability of collectivism' and the need to 'plan production'. Influential Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes referred to an 'irreconcilable conflict' between 'the power of money and the power of the democratic instinct', fearing 'big business and the coming of a Fascist America – an enslaved America'.²⁹

Substantive social democratic threads were thus woven into the American political–economic order by the end of the Second World War. Such

29 S. Fraser, 'The New Deal in the American Political Imagination', available at www.jacobinmag.com/2019/06/new-deal-great-depression, last accessed 4 February 2021.

advances, however, had been achieved without concordant organizational gains by the formally left political bodies. As historian Nelson Lichtenstein pithily summarizes:

[Norman] Thomas explained the demise of his [SPA] party by declaring, with some justification, that ‘Roosevelt stole our program’ . . . But what happened to the Socialists – Socialists joined and led the new unions, they helped found key liberal organizations like the American Student Union, the Congress of American Writers, the Americans for Democratic Action, and they were founders of third parties in Minnesota, Michigan, New York, and in Canada. They were anti-fascists.³⁰

For the American socialist movement, the 1950s represented both a nadir and a significant point of realignment. In 1955, the SPA reported a mere 691 members, and it ran its last presidential ticket the following year. By that time, leadership of the movement had shifted from the Norman Thomas group of old socialists to a new intellectual constellation around ex-Trotskyist Max Shachtman, who influenced a wide circle of independent intellectuals, AFL–CIO leaders, and early civil rights figures, including A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and James Farmer. Organizationally, the social democrats of the era helped to midwife political formations that proved to be much more powerful than themselves. The Michael Harrington-led youth branch of the SPA’s League for Industrial Democracy reorganized itself as Students for a Democratic Society in 1960 and then co-sponsored a national organizing convention that endorsed the so-called Port Huron Statement, heralding the New Left in 1962. On the civil rights front, James Farmer, as director of the Congress of Racial Equality, initiated the path-breaking Freedom Rides across Alabama and Mississippi in 1961; while two years later Randolph and Rustin organized the March on Washington, where the Revd Martin Luther King, Jr, famously spoke from the Lincoln Memorial.³¹

New Social Movements

Overall, the distinctive contribution of the democratic left from the 1960s to the 1980s lay less in its governmental imprint than in characteristic mobilization of communities through the so-called new social movements. The

30 N. Lichtenstein, ‘American Socialism, Then and Now (Part One)’, available at www.dsasusa.org/democratic-left/american-socialism-then-and-now-part-one, last accessed 3 February 2021.

31 J. Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), pp. 453–85.

emphasis of prior years on 'unionism and socialism', as historian James N. Gregory observes, now generally (the United Farm Workers serving as a notable exception) 'took a back seat' to an attack on systems of inequality based on race, and then on gender and sexuality. Heavily composed of young people, the new movements – as exemplified by the 1960s grassroots stalwarts the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) – all disdained top-down bureaucratic efficiency in favour of decentralized, 'grassroots' organization and communicative channels. The Gregory-led Mapping American Social Movements Project thus identifies 'more than 2600 underground, alternative, or radical periodicals serving more than 300 communities during the decade from 1965–1975'. The era promoted single-issue campaigns (e.g., ACT UP versus the HIV-AIDS epidemic, the anti-nuclear movement, or Greenpeace and Earth First environmentalists) and solidarity movements (especially concerning Central America and South Africa) far better than it did any larger reframing of the socialist cause. Likely the closest the period came to a broader statement of common goals emerged in the call for racial and economic justice of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988.³²

The most effective, if often little-noticed, sign of social democratic continuity through the complex braiding and often tumultuous passage of the new social movements was traced by the career of the peripatetic author, poet, and activist Michael Harrington. He had first achieved public renown and a permanent place in left-liberal policy circles in 1962 with his best-selling *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, a work that was said to have inspired President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty three years later. Fed up with the Cold War orientation of social democrats, US, and AFL-CIO leaders who in 1972 refused to endorse anti-war Democratic candidate George McGovern for president, Harrington founded the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) in search of a 'viable, relevant socialist center for thought and action – a center geared to the everyday experiences of activists in the trade unions, in the women's movement, in the struggles for minority rights, and in all the movements of the democratic left'. Of necessity working in coalitions and forswearing third-party formations in favour of Democratic Party candidates whom Harrington labelled 'the left

32 J. N. Gregory, 'Remapping the American left: a history of radical discontinuity', *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 17, 2 (2020), pp. 11–45 at pp. 29–30, 32–3.

wing of the possible', the DSOC recruited some 4,000 members at its peak in 1980, before it merged with a sister outgrowth of the New Left, the New America Movement, in 1983, together reaching 6,000 members as the largest socialist organization since the SP in 1936. Although his own seemingly unquenchable energies helped to carry the DSA through the worst of political times in the Reagan era, the organization barely survived its founder's premature death from cancer in 1989.³³

Bernieism: Towards a Rebirth of Social Democracy?

The 2008 financial crisis – cutting particularly into the economic prospects of younger people already burdened with heavy student debt, while generally contrasting the fate of millions who lost homes or other equity while the nation's largest banks were bailed out with government subsidies – sparked a grassroots revival of the American left. To be sure, evidence of a growing systemic critique of 'globalization' – a stage of global capitalism characterized by free trade agreements and free-flowing capital investment and disinvestment in pursuit of ever-wider markets and ever-cheaper production – and the accompanying political pressures towards 'deregulation' and the collapse of labour standards had already evoked mass protest. The 1999 Seattle meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the organization that most notoriously symbolized the globalized economy, were noisily interrupted by joint labour and environmental (or 'teamster and turtle') opposition. Soon, the World Social Forum, initially hosted in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, by the government of workers' champion Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva helped to galvanize support for a 'counter-hegemonic' globalization behind the slogan 'Another World Is Possible'.

The 2008 crisis, then, proved something of a political reawakening. Its visible fallout came in two waves. First, as aided by the instant communication of the Internet and social media, the Occupy Wall Street movement burst into the streets in September 2011 – beginning at Zucotti Park in Lower Manhattan but soon copied around the world – recapturing the spontaneity and decentralism of early-1960s radicalism within its democratic encampments, but also with somewhat similar uncertainty about strategic aims and

33 R. A. Gorman, *Michael Harrington: Speaking American* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 7, 10; see also M. Harrington, *The Long-Distance Runner: An Autobiography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988).

strategy. The second clear manifestation of rupture with liberal-Democratic politics – and one expressing open frustration with the moderation of Obama-era fiscal, immigration, and trade policy – registered in Bernie Sanders' campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination in both 2016 and 2020. A lifelong socialist who claimed Debs as his personal hero, Sanders had continually served his adopted state of Vermont since 1981 as mayor, Congressman, and then US Senator since 2007, and always running as an 'independent' (although blocking legislatively with Democrats). Now, in 2016 in taking on the party's all-but-anointed frontrunner in the person of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Sanders provoked a sharp split in liberal ranks. Even as he narrowly fell short of the nomination, capturing 46 per cent of the vote in party caucuses and primaries, Sanders touched a deep nerve in the body politic with a call for a 'political revolution' based on taxing the rich and corporations, radical campaign finance reform, and a single-payer, Medicare-for-All health insurance system.

Momentum from the Bernie campaign inevitably also buttressed other democratic socialists. According to one 2016 Gallup Poll, an astonishing 58 per cent of respondents registered a positive view of socialism. DSA (which had enthusiastically backed Sanders although he was not a member) passed 10,000 members in November 2016 and jumped to 40,000 in June 2018 when New York City's AOC (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez), one of several openly declared socialist candidates, won her primary election before going on to take a seat in the US Congress. By June 2019, having endorsed forty-three winning local candidates and thirty-four ballot initiatives, DSA, with 50,000-plus members, had re-established social democracy, for the first time in a century, as an organized electoral force that mattered in US political life.³⁴

Outside the Bernie campaigns and DSA proper, other signs of a cultural shift to the left also abounded. Since 1998, for example, left-of-centre candidates across New York State have been bolstered by votes from the Working Families Party, a coalition of labour unions and community action groups dedicated to economic justice that takes advantage of the state's peculiar electoral fusion laws. In addition to longstanding journals on the democratic socialist left like *Dissent*, *In These Times*, *The Progressive*, *Mother Jones*, and *The American Prospect*, since 2000 the socialist quarterly *Jacobin*, edited by Bhaskar Sunkara in New York City with a reported 60,000 subscribers, has made

34 J. Bouie, 'Trump Is Making "Socialism" Sound Pretty Good', *New York Times*, 24 February 2019; D. Henwood, 'The Socialist Network', *New Republic* (2019), pp. 14–15.

a strong pitch to become the leading voice of the new progressive movement.

To be sure, the very invocation of 'socialism' as a concept still sets off a powerful backlash, as discovered in the middle of the 2020 primaries when all his rivals (and most of the Democratic Party hierarchs) attacked Sanders and endorsed former vice-president Joe Biden, who went on to wrap up the nomination. Yet beside the issue of electability, the Sanders campaign also reawakened the question that haunts the social democratic project across the West: just what does it stand for, or, perhaps more exactly, how does it distinguish itself from other varieties of left-liberalism?³⁵ In both 2016 and 2020, when pressed to elucidate his vision of democratic socialism, Sanders himself clung closely to FDR's New Deal, identifying his programme, as commentator Harold Meyerson took note, with Roosevelt's famous call in 1944 for an Economic Bill of Rights: Sanders formally proposed 'a twenty-first-century Economic Bill of Rights', complete with a right to a living-wage job, high-quality health care, a complete education, affordable housing, a clean environment, and a secure retirement. 'Socialism', Sanders scoffed at conservative critics, 'is their name for almost anything that helps all the people.'³⁶ In choosing the New Deal analogy (however smart an electoral tactic) while ignoring a reckoning with the legacy of Debs, Thomas, or even Michael Harrington, the Sanders boom still leaves both the meaning and the future direction of social democracy in the United States up in the air.

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35 Compare, e.g., M. van der Linden, 'Metamorphoses of European Social Democracy (1870–2000)', in M. van der Linden (ed.), *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 99; H. Prantl, 'Der Vorarbeiter der Republik', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 31 January 2021.

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Social Democracy in Japan

ALEXANDER BROWN

Introduction

Japan has had just two socialist prime ministers: Katayama Tetsu (1887–1978) from May 1947 until March 1948, and Murayama Tomiichi (1924–) from June 1994 until January 1996.¹ Nearly fifty years separate the two leaders, but their premierships and the similarities between them encapsulate the fate of social democracy in Japan. Both Katayama and Murayama became prime minister as part of coalition cabinets with their erstwhile conservative rivals as part of governments of national unity during political crises. Both paid dearly for the compromise. Their short terms in office, eleven months in Katayama's case and eighteen months in Murayama's, were followed by electoral disasters for their party with long-lasting consequences. Following Katayama's premiership, the Japan Socialist Party faced nearly fifty years in the political wilderness. After Murayama resigned in favour of his coalition partner, his party split. At the October 1996 election the party was reduced to a shell of its former self with just fifteen seats in Japan's Lower House.

Despite the failure of social democrats to achieve parliamentary majorities, Japan did build a broadly social democratic polity after the Second World War. Indeed, Japan's model of developmentalist capitalism, wherein the state retained a firm grip on private enterprise and market competition, has some striking similarities to the socialist planned economies. Nor has social democracy's failure as an electoral project since the 1990s led to the unrestrained neoliberalism characteristic of many other advanced capitalist countries. Japan's national health insurance scheme, though eroded, remains intact, and while the social insurance system has been justly criticized, it still constitutes a significant safety net. The centre-right Liberal Democratic Party and Kōmeitō (Clean Government Party) coalition, which has governed

1 Japanese names are presented with the family name first in accordance with Japanese usage.

since 2012, has introduced further welfare measures, such as a free childcare scheme which came into effect in October 2019.

How do we explain the apparent contradiction between the failure of parliamentary social democracy and the reality of Japan's substantially social democratic polity? Given widespread support for social democratic policies, why has social democracy fared so badly electorally? This chapter argues that despite social democracy's apparent weakness in Japan, it has exercised a significant influence. The result might best be described as a conservative social democracy that is clearly state capitalist, but in which the worst excesses of authoritarianism, *laissez faire*, and militarism have been partially restrained. Japanese social democracy rests on the three pillars of democracy, regulated capitalism, and pacifism, and while all three have shown signs of strain since the 1990s, they have endured. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the fact that despite Japan having developed one of the largest military forces in the world, they remain constitutionally constrained. While Japan has supported US militarism financially and diplomatically as well as hosting US military bases, its own armed forces have not played a significant role in any overseas military conflict since 1945.

I begin by reviewing the emergence of social democracy in the early twentieth century, when rising tides of militarism and nationalism ultimately consumed Japan. I then trace the rebuilding of the socialist movement in the post-Second World War period, focusing on the struggles of radical labour and the resulting social democratic compromise. Moving on to the 1960s and 1970s, I look at the consolidation of labour control within the developmental state, the continuing importance of the peace movement, and the emergence of progressive localism at the prefectural and municipal levels. Finally, I examine the decline of political social democracy in Japan as neoliberal privatization and deregulation in the 1980s undermined its electoral base and stagnant economic growth in the 1990s weakened the standard employment model. The Japan Socialist Party all but disappeared from the national political stage at the turn of the century. It has been replaced by a vaguely 'liberal' opposition. I suggest that while political social democracy has ebbed, it lives on within an emerging social movement that has eclipsed the organized left.

Pre-War Socialism

In 1853, US gunboats commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Japan demanding that Japan open itself to trade with the West. This acted as

the catalyst for the 'restoration' of imperial rule carried out in the name of the young Meiji emperor after three centuries of feudalism under the hegemony of the Tokugawa samurai clan. Japanese elites responded to the growing pressures of imperialism by seeking to Westernize and modernize Japan. The Meiji rulers imported people, technologies, and ideas which would help to shake off the unequal treaties foisted upon them by the United States and the European powers. A modern nation-state was constructed along the lines of German authoritarianism. The Meiji emperor's 1868 Charter Oath eliminated the feudal class system, abolished the feudal domains, and established a modern administrative apparatus. An imperial military force was established, and conscription for all adult males helped to eliminate the distinction between samurai and commoners. Liberal ideas entered Japan as part of the wholesale import and translation of texts that took place in this period and helped to influence the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. This movement in turn influenced the establishment of Japan's first parliamentary government under the Meiji Constitution of 1890.

Socialist thought arrived in Japan alongside other ideas, on a spectrum from classical liberalism to Bismarckian authoritarianism. Many of the earliest socialists in Japan were Christians who had been educated in the United States and were motivated by a spirit of charity and social reform rather than class struggle. Some of them joined Japan's first socialist organization, the Society for the Study of Socialism (Shakai Shugi Kenkyūkai), founded in November 1898.² While most early socialists preferred education to organizing, some among them were labour organizers, such as Katayama Sen (1859–1933).³ A modern labour movement began to take shape with the formation of a metalworkers union in 1897.⁴ There were some strikes, but unions lacked the financial resources to support them and they were made entirely illegal in 1900.⁵

The Meiji authorities were quick to identify socialism and organized labour as a threat. They developed an extensive repressive apparatus to contain the spread of socialist ideas and to imprison and punish its sympathizers. The Public Order and Police Provisions Law (1900) had a severe

2 H. Kublin, 'The origins of Japanese socialist tradition', *Journal of Politics* 14 (1952), pp. 257–80.

3 On Katayama, see Ōta Hideaki, *Nihon shakai minshu shugi no keisei. Katayama Sen to sono jidai* [*The Formation of Democracy in Japanese Society: Katayama Sen and His Era*] (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 2013); H. Kublin, *Asian Revolutionary: The Life of Sen Katayama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

4 A. Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Pre-War Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

5 K. Nimura, 'Japan', in M. van der Linden and J. Rojahn (eds.), *The Formation of Labour Movements 1870–1914: An International Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), vol. 11, pp. 673–95.

impact on the fledgling movement. Japan's first socialist political party, the Shakai Minshutō (Social Democratic Party), was founded in May 1901 in an attempt to avoid this repression. Minister of Home Affairs Baron Suematsu ordered the party's dissolution on the same day and laid charges against the editors of newspapers who had published the new party's platform, which was based in part on *The Communist Manifesto*.⁶ Labour organizing continued nonetheless, with the Yūaikai (Friendly Society) formed in 1912 based on the principle of the early British friendly societies.⁷ None of these early organizing efforts attracted a significant membership.

Other socialists were motivated by pacifism and opposition to modern Japan's own imperialist wars. Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911) developed a theory of anti-imperialism in response to Japan's involvement in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion on the Chinese mainland.⁸ He founded the Commoners Society (Heiminsha) in 1903 together with Ōsugi Sakai (1885–1923).⁹ It was based on a mixture of Christian pacifism, anti-imperialism, and proletarian internationalism. The society opposed the Russo-Japanese War in the pages of its newspaper, but was subject to censorship when the tide of war seemed to turn against Japan. These early socialists developed their praxis within the broader global currents of the anarchist and socialist movements.¹⁰ Kōtoku visited the United States in 1905–6, whereafter he became the leading exponent in Japan of an anarchist-inspired 'direct-action' strategy. In 1910, the government alleged that it had uncovered a plot to assassinate the emperor, which was attributed to Kōtoku and other anarchists, such as Kanno Sugako (1881–1911). Twenty-four anarchist sympathizers were sentenced to death in what has come to be known as the High Treason Incident.¹¹ The incident signalled the beginning of a period of heightened repression of the left known as the 'socialist winter'.

Japan developed its first party political system, albeit with an extremely limited franchise, during the period known as 'Taishō Democracy' from 1918 to

6 Kublin, 'Origins', pp. 267–8.

7 S. Large, *The Rise of Labour in Japan: The Yūaikai 1912–1919* (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1972).

8 R. T. Tierney, *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Kōtoku Shūsui and Japan's First Anti-Imperialist Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

9 Umemori Naoyuki (ed.), *Teikoku o ute. Heiminsha 100nen kokusai shinpojumu* [Striking Imperialism: International Symposium on the 100th Anniversary of the Heiminsha] (Tokyo: Ronsōsha, 2005).

10 Umemori Naoyuki, *Shakaishugi no chikeigaku (topogurafi). Ōsugi Sakae to sono jidai* [The Topography of Socialism: Ōsugi Sakae and His Era] (Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2016).

11 M. Gavin and B. Middleton, *Japan and the High Treason Incident* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); H. Bowen Raddeker, *Treacherous Women of Imperial Japan: Patriarchal Fictions, Patricidal Fantasies* (London: Routledge, 1997).

1932. A new wave of strike activity in the 1920s proved to be fertile ground for the development of a wide-ranging labour and socialist movement. This included the formation of a national federation of labour and farmers unions in the early 1920s and the founding of the Japan Communist Party (JCP) in 1922. Japanese enterprises reacted to a fluid labour market by instituting what has been called 'industrial paternalism' – providing significant non-wage benefits such as low-cost boarding houses and other services as well as regular graded pay increases and lifetime employment to skilled workers who remained with employers on a long-term basis. Company unions were formed to help maintain labour loyalty, meaning that independent unions were mostly confined to smaller factories and shops where high turnover of labour and a boom–bust cycle made long-term organizing nigh on impossible.¹²

Repression continued to be a feature of labour organizing in the 1920s, but Stephen Large points out that repression alone does not adequately explain the failures of the labour movement.¹³ Gendered notions of what constituted a worker proved to be a major obstacle to labour organizing. Japanese industrial development began with textile manufacturing in the late nineteenth century, an industry that relied primarily on female labour.¹⁴ However, the patriarchal family and gender ideology enshrined in the Meiji Civil Code of 1898 positioned women as 'good wives and wise mothers'. The 1900 Chian Keisatsu Hō (Public Peace Police Law) prohibited women's participation in political activity. Young women did carry out spontaneous strike activity against the extremely exploitative conditions in the factories, but the labour movement failed to organize them on a mass basis.¹⁵ Factory legislation promulgated in 1910 placed some restrictions on the exploitation of women and child workers, but both its drafters and male labour organizers cast women as gendered workers in need of protection rather than as workers with rights.¹⁶ Labour organizing was further inhibited by the fact that female factory labourers were initially drawn mainly from the country and lived in factory-controlled boarding houses that were inaccessible to labour organizers. Repealing restrictions on women's participation in politics

12 Ōkōchi Kazuo and Matsuo Hiroshi, *Nihon rōdō kumiai monogatari: Shōwa* [The Story of Japanese Labour Unions: Shōwa] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965).

13 S. Large, 'Perspectives on the failure of the labour movement in pre-war Japan', *Labour History* 37 (1979), pp. 15–27; S. Large, *Organized Workers and Socialist Politics in Interwar Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

14 J. Hunter, *Managing Women: Disciplining Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

15 V. Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 13–14.

16 Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women*, pp. 74–80.

was a focus of women's political activism in the Meiji period. The early 1920s also saw the establishment of socialist women's groups such as the Red Wave Society (Sekirankai) and Eighth Day Society (Yōkakai). Women's suffrage leagues later emerged alongside the proletarian parties that were founded following the enactment of manhood suffrage in 1925.¹⁷

As a distinct socialist movement emerged, Marxists tried to understand the nature of the Meiji restoration and the society it had produced. This led to the first major project by Japanese intellectuals to understand their own recent history in a debate that came to be known as the debate on Japanese capitalism. The Comintern and its supporters in the JCP, who were known as the Kōza faction, saw the Meiji restoration as an incomplete bourgeois revolution that had failed to do away with the vestiges of feudal society. Therefore, they argued, socialists must first fight for the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In opposition to this view, the Rōnō (worker-farmer) faction of the Communist Party, formed around party leader Yamakawa Hitoshi (1880–1958), argued that Japan was already a bourgeois-democratic society and that conditions were ripe for socialist revolution. They rejected the need for a vanguard party in favour of the broadest possible alliance of the proletariat and its supporters in a legal, mass-based united front political party. Yamakawa and his supporters left the Communist Party in protest at its adoption of the Comintern's July 1927 Theses on Japan. Rōnō faction intellectuals formed the nucleus of the left wing of the Japan Socialist Party after the war.¹⁸

Following the passage of manhood suffrage in May 1925, labour and farmers' unions as well as left-wing intellectuals began working to establish proletarian political parties in order to contest the first elections in 1928. Despite widespread hopes of building a united party, the result was a 'bewildering series of tentative party foundings, ruptures, and renewed negotiations'.¹⁹ As socialists argued amongst themselves over history and strategy, the Japanese economy faced a deepening crisis. On 15 March 1928, the police arrested 1,600 associates of the JCP under the Peace Preservation Law (1925), crippling JCP influence in the socialist and labour movements.²⁰ Having distanced itself from the communists, the legal socialist movement

17 C. S. Schieder, 'Demanding Publics: Women and Activism', in J. Coates, L. Fraser, and M. Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 210–18.

18 G. A. Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

19 Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy*, p. 199.

20 G. M. Beckmann and Okubo Genji, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 138–63.

was able to continue. However, a deep-rooted populist nationalism under the leadership of young military officers offered a revolutionary solution to the problems of the Great Depression and enjoyed the support of the peasantry.²¹ In July 1932, various socialist groups combined to form the Shakai Taishūtō (Social Masses Party, SM)).²² The left, however, won just 5 of the 466 Lower House seats in the Diet elections of that year. Some socialists believed that supporting the nationalist movement would enhance their electability. In the general elections of 30 April 1937, two months before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War on 7 July, the SMP won thirty-six seats but threw its support behind the army in the name of national defence.²³

Left-wing unionists sought to organize a popular front in opposition to the right-wing SMP's collaboration with the militarists. They founded the Nihon Musantō (Japan Proletarian Party, JPP) in February 1937 and tried to use it to organize a popular front. However, in 1940, the authorities moved against the legal left, asserting that the JPP's popular front strategy was a communist one. The police dissolved the JPP and its affiliated union federation Zempyō (National Council of Japanese Labour Unions) and arrested 400 members and sympathizers.²⁴ In 1940, the few remaining independent unions were forcibly dissolved into a new organization under the Home and Welfare Ministry dubbed Sangyō Hōkoku Renmei, abbreviated to Sanpō (Federation of Patriotic Industrial Service), which was intended to support the war effort. Some labour organizers tried to continue even under wartime conditions. The Shuppankō Kurabu (Print and Publishing Workers Club) continued to operate covertly as a culture circle into 1942.²⁵ Nevertheless, by the early 1940s, most of the socialist movement had either been imprisoned or converted to support for Japanese expansionism, or remained silent.

The Struggle for Democracy

The war years were hard on the nascent socialist movement, but as the war dragged on the police observed 'growing contempt for existing authority

21 J. A. A. Stockwin, *The Japanese Socialist Party and Neutralism: A Study of a Political Party and Its Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1968), p. 25.

22 Masujima Hiroshi, Takahashi Hikohiro, and Ono Setsuko (eds.), *Musan seitō no kenkyū* [Research into Proletarian Parties] (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1969).

23 J. Banno, 'The Left in the Shaping of Japanese Democracy: Historical Review', in R. Kersten, D. Williams, and J. Banno (eds.), *The Left in the Shaping of Japanese Democracy: Essays in Honour of J. A. A. Stockwin* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 162–73.

24 Beckmann and Okubo, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922–1945*, pp. 260–4.

25 M. Sugiura, *Against the Storm: How Japanese Printworkers Resisted the Military Regime, 1935–1945* (Melbourne: Interventions, 2019).

extending even to the emperor himself'. In the final months of the war, in February 1945, former prime minister Prince Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945) made a personal plea to the emperor to surrender in order to avert what he perceived as a threat of communist revolution. By 1945, chronic absenteeism exceeded 50 per cent and the police recorded a growing number of letters, statements, and wall writings which they regarded as 'disrespectful, antiwar, antimilitary, or in other ways inflammatory'.²⁶ During the economic chaos that followed the defeat in August 1945, Japan's ruling class engaged in a capital strike, refusing to invest in production, stockpiling capital goods and materials, and refusing to maintain production even in existing facilities. There were shortages of food, clothing, and housing for a population that was already destitute and traumatized by the experience of total war. The anger and desperation of the Japanese people boiled over in a wave of strikes and production control struggles which, initially at least, seemed to have the tacit support of the occupying forces. Workers seized plant and equipment and tried to increase production under workers' control. The first major example took place at the Yomiuri Newspaper. Other examples of these so-called 'work-ins' occurred in coal mines and at the Keisei Electric Railway Company.²⁷

Thirteen former socialist Diet members formed Japan's first post-war political party in November 1945. The Nihon Shakaitō (lit., Japan Socialist Party, JSP) adopted the more cautious official English translation of Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ) and announced a vague programme aspiring to democracy, socialism, and eternal peace at the party's founding convention attended by 5,000 people. Katayama Tetsu was elected secretary-general. When elections were held for the first time in April 1946, the socialists won ninety-two seats and 18 per cent of the vote. At the 1947 election, the Socialists won 143 seats in the Lower House, the largest number commanded by any single party but not an absolute majority. Lengthy negotiations produced a coalition government that included the Democratic Party, one of two conservative parties. However, Katayama's cabinet proved unable to deal with the deepening economic crisis. Divisions within the left and right wings of the JSP and between it and its coalition partners forced Katayama's resignation in February 1948. The JSP participated in the succeeding conservative-led cabinet, but at the January 1949

26 J. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993), pp. 103, 129.

27 J. Moore, *Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power, 1945–1947* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

election, their vote was shattered. The JSP went from 143 to 48 seats in the Lower House.²⁸

The socialist movement benefited from many of the early Occupation-era reforms as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964), began his administration of Japan. SCAP's demilitarization and democratization efforts included the release of political prisoners, the passage of progressive labour legislation, and the break-up of the *zaibatsu*, the large industrial conglomerates. A purge of former militarists from the government and bureaucracy was also carried out. After the initial period of democratization and opening, though, SCAP responded to production control and food redistribution struggles by intervening against the left. When more than 50,000 workers protested at the prime minister's residence in spring 1946, the police and SCAP authorities responded by firing warning shots. It was an indication of the coming change of course. In May 1946, MacArthur issued a public condemnation of 'mass violence'. The conservative establishment moved swiftly to shore up their position by working with SCAP against the organized left. Under Liberal Party Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967), they moved to re-establish the *laissez faire* economy of the 1920s, with handouts to the *zaibatsu* and a counter-offensive against the unions. Business was already working to undermine industrial unionism and restrict bargaining to the enterprise level.

In the second half of 1946, the left-wing unions launched a strike wave that aimed to entrench labour's rights to organize. In August 1946, union federations Sōdōmei (General Federation of Labour) and the more radical Sangyōbetsu Kaigi (Congress of Industrial Unions) were reconstituted. The latter, which was increasingly dominated by the communists, became the dominant force, with 1.5 million members, and adopted a militant industrial unionism. Political activism by public sector unions was a particular concern of both the Occupation authorities and the Japanese government. The establishment began to reconsider its position. Progressive business leaders worked with government and the right wing of the labour movement to develop a more planned approach to production, including a place at the table for enterprise-level union organizing. When labour leaders began planning for a nationwide general strike in the winter of 1947, SCAP came out strongly against them, ultimately banning the strike. Right-wing unionists set up conservative 'democratization leagues' within the unions in order

28 A. Cole, G. Totten, and C. Uyehara, *Socialist Parties in Postwar Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 3–25.

to undermine left-wing leadership. In 1948, anti-labour legislation was introduced that helped to restrain the public sector unions, which represented the main strength of the left, and enabled mass dismissals. The left was divided internally and the pressure of mass firings and the leagues typically resulted in the setting up of a 'second union' at the enterprise level with which management agreed to negotiate.²⁹

The wave of socialist revolutions in Asia motivated the United States and the Occupation authorities, which it largely controlled, to remould post-war Japan as a bulwark against communism in Asia under US dominance. In 1949, the government revised earlier progressive labour laws to restrict the power of labour unions in private enterprises. In 1949, the campaign against the left went up a notch with a purge launched by SCAP and the Yoshida Government in the media and politics. MacArthur attacked the Communist Party and its newspaper *Akahata* (*Red Flag*) in May–June 1950 on the eve of the Korean War. On 3 May, he announced a 'Red Purge' to drive out communist elements. The radical left union federations were undermined and hundreds of thousands of workers who had taken part in earlier militant struggles were dismissed. A new union federation, Sōhyō (General Council of Japanese Trade Unions), was founded in July 1950 to supplant the more radical Sōdōmei and Sangyōbetsu Kaigi. However, while Sōhyō proved to be more compliant on labour questions, it took a militant stance on foreign relations. It opposed both the terms of the San Francisco Treaty (1952) and the US–Japan Security Treaty (1951).

With the victory of the communists in China in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the pacifist constitution, which had been drafted by the Occupation authorities, soon proved to be an obstacle to American plans. Conservatives within the Japanese government began a campaign to revise the constitution and to undermine it in practice that has continued to the present day. In December 1949, the JSP under left-wing leadership adopted a policy of 'permanent neutrality' in response to what it saw as the growing threat of Japan becoming part of the US anti-communist bloc. The right-wing faction, to which Katayama Tetsu had belonged, was discredited after having led the party in its first, disastrous foray into government in 1947, as was the centre faction. At the party's congress in 1949, the left wing entered the ascendancy with the election of the left-wing leader Suzuki Mosaburō to secretary-general. A widespread pacifist mood prevailed in Japan following

29 Moore, *Japanese Workers*, pp. 209–43.



Fig. 11.1 Suzuki Mosaburō, chairman of the Japanese Socialist Party, and Mrs Suzuki cast their votes in the House of Councillors election at a polling station in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, 8 July 1956. This was the first election held under the so-called 1955 system, in which the socialists became entrenched in permanent opposition to the new conservative party created through the merger of the Liberal and Democratic Parties. (Keystone Press/Alamy.)

the war. The Suzuki faction, whose members had suffered personally at the hands of the militarists, were eager not to repeat a build-up of military power in Japan. Their support for international socialism meant they did not want to rely on the capitalist powers. They also sought to maintain friendly relations

with China and the Soviet Union without being entangled in military alliances with the communists. As Arthur Stockwin points out, their neutrality also represented a form of left-wing nationalism in which 'Japan, as an advanced nation, should assert her national independence, for the international cause of peace and socialism.'³⁰

Neutralism prompted a split in the Socialist Party, but the left and right of the party reunited in 1955. Business elites, who were concerned about the unification and rising popularity of the socialists, encouraged the conservative Liberal and Democrat parties to form a new party: the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The opposition between these two parties gave form to the '1955 system', in which the Diet was dominated by the LDP with the socialists and communists consigned to permanent opposition, unable to form a government. Both the JSP and the social democratic forces more generally, however, continued to struggle for democracy through the unions and social movements. One of the key battlegrounds was education, which had been an important vehicle for instilling patriotic support for Japanese militarism during wartime. The Fundamental Law on Education passed in 1947, during the Occupation, guaranteed democratic, pacifist, and free (compulsory) education. Progressive educators organized Japan's large national teachers' union, Nikkyōso, which covered 85 per cent of all schoolteachers by 1955. The teachers' union became a bedrock of support for the JSP and wrote the party's educational policies.³¹

While the social democratic and communist left had initially supported the Occupation authorities in the name of democratization, when 'the Americans threw their weight behind Japan under a conservative administration as an anti-communist bastion . . . the rising streams of socialism and pacifism flowed together into an anti-American torrent'.³² This manifested itself in a groundswell of opposition to the extension of the US–Japan Security Treaty (Anpo) in 1960. Socialists, students, women's groups, and even some members of the LDP objected to the way the treaty made Japan dependent on the United States. Opposition to the Security Treaty transcended any one party. A democratic cultural movement proliferated in the 1950s in the form of non-partisan circles, usually organized around a cultural activity such as

30 Stockwin, *The Japanese Socialist Party and Neutralism*, p. 37.

31 R. W. Aspinall, 'The Rise and Fall of Nikkyōso: Classroom Idealism, Union Power and the Three Phases of Japanese Politics Since 1955', in Kersten, Williams, and Banno (eds.), *The Left in the Shaping of Japanese Democracy*, pp. 66–7.

32 Stockwin, *The Japanese Socialist Party and Neutralism*, p. 15.

singing, theatre, writing poetry, or hiking. The JSP and the JCP made specific efforts to organize these circles, with the JSP and its affiliated labour federation Sōhyō forming a national alliance of circles known as the Kokumin Bunka Kaigi (National Congress of Culture). However, even in party-organized circles, members tended to see themselves and their activities as autonomous from party leaderships. The circle movement was one source of a new form of citizen action that came to prominence during the anti-Anpo movement. Circle members saw themselves as independent from the institutions of social democracy. This enabled a significant degree of self-organization by members.³³ Protests against treaty renewal exploded on the eve of ratification in April 1960. On 19 May, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke (1896–1987) forced the ratification of the treaty through the Diet. Socialist Diet members conducted a ‘cow walk’, a form of protest in which they walked slowly through the chamber in order to try to prevent a vote. Kishi called in the police to eject them. The democratic revolution promised in the constitution and embraced enthusiastically by millions in the wake of the defeat in war lay in tatters.

Civilizing Japan Inc.: 1960–1980

Chalmers Johnson argues that, in post-war Japan, the bureaucracy guided industrial policy in the interests of strong economic growth, characterizing it as a developmental state. Johnson, however, neglected the importance of labour control, which ‘under developmentalism is driven to be tightly constructed around national economic goals, and to be enmeshed with concerted nationwide efforts’.³⁴ While the radical labour movement failed in its fight for workers’ control in the early post-war years, resurgent Japanese elites were forced to accept a compromise in which labour traded off much of its independence for a share in the fruits of high economic growth. Following the passage of the Anpo treaty in 1960, Kishi resigned in favour of Ikeda Hayato (1899–1965). Ikeda’s ‘income-doubling plan’ was the price the conservatives paid for wedding their interests with that of US imperialism. In this new context of class compromise, social democracy developed its own

33 W. Sasaki-Uemura, *Organizing the Spontaneous: Citizen Protest in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), pp. 26–9. For a detailed study of the circle movement in southern Tokyo, see Michiba Chikanobu, *Shimomaruko Bunka Shūdan to sono jidai. 1950-nendai sākuru bunka undō no kōbō* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 2016).

34 M. Hayashi, ‘Democracy against labor movement: Japan’s anti-labor development state and aftermaths’, *Critical Sociology* 47 (2021), pp. 37–58 at 43.

strategies for increasing labour's share of a growing pie. More than 100 million workers all over Japan mobilized for the general strike in April 1952. However, Nikkeiren, the Japan business federation, helped to co-ordinate labour control at the firm level, advising firms on how to dismiss radical workers and promoting business-friendly unions. Major struggles fought against the growth of enterprise-unionism and authoritarian labour relations included lockouts at the Japan Steel Works in Hokkaido in 1954 in response to planned dismissals and the dispute at the Mitsui Miike coal mines in Kyushu between 1959 and 1960. Workers at the mine garnered nationwide support, but were eventually defeated through the mobilization of the police, business-friendly unions, and hired thugs.³⁵

After the defeat of radical unionism, the moderate unions coalesced around the Shuntō (Spring Offensive). During the Spring Offensive, unions organized co-ordinated strikes by enterprise-level unions of short duration as part of bargaining with firms for 'acceptable' wage increases. Under the Spring Offensive system, the union leadership became part of a tripartite system of labour control together with the state and business groups that characterized the period of economic growth. However, even this moderate form of unionism proved to be problematic for capital when Japan lost its competitive advantage based on low wages and wage demands began to threaten profitability following the global recession of the 1970s. Capital began to use the Spring Offensive framework as a tool to soften up workers to make 'necessary' sacrifices on wages as political leaders called on labour to forgo wage increases to tackle the national crisis.³⁶ As Hayashi explains, when wages 'began to gnaw away at strategic industries in the profit-squeezing, critical phase of development, the reward was retracted without endangering state autonomy – through the evolution of labor control along ideological lines'.³⁷

Both pre-war and post-war labour movements in Japan also tended to employ masculinized ideas of the worker that excluded women, relegating them to the private sphere as wives and mothers.³⁸ The New Left movement that emerged in the 1950s but proliferated across university campuses in the

35 J. Price, 'The 1960 Miike Coal Mine dispute: turning point for adversarial unionism in Japan?', *Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars* 23 (1991), pp. 30–43; Y. Hirai, *Mitsui Miike Sōgi* (Tokyo: Mineruva Shobō, 2000).

36 Hasegawa Harukiyo (ed.), *Gendai Nihon kigyō to rōshi kankei* [Contemporary Japanese Corporations and Industrial Relations] (Tokyo: Rōdō Junpyō Sha, 1981).

37 Hayashi, 'Democracy against labor movement', p. 52.

38 Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women*; C. Gerteis, *Gender Struggles: Wage-Earning Women and Male-Dominated Unions in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

1960s acted as a challenge to established left activism by expanding the concept of liberation and organizing more democratically. Gendered expectations were reproduced within the New Left as well. Women were often relegated to supporting duties while heroic male activists dominated the streets.³⁹

With wage struggles safely confined to the enterprise, other social issues became central to socialist politics. The new constitution had been intended to prevent Japanese rearmament indefinitely. Article 9 outlaws war and the maintenance of armed forces. This 'peace Constitution' gained widespread popular support. Defending Article 9 and opposition to nuclear weapons became hallmarks of post-war progressivism and were championed by the JSP. When the Japanese tuna fishing trawler *Lucky Dragon No. 5* was exposed to radioactive fallout from the Castle Bravo hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in March 1954, it sparked a nationwide movement against nuclear testing. The Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyō) was formed, with its inaugural World Conference Against A- and H-Bombs in Hiroshima on 6 August 1955. While opposition to nuclear weapons helped to define the social democratic movement, the possession of nuclear weapons by the socialist states split Gensuikyō. A major split occurred in 1963 over whether the movement should oppose nuclear testing and armament universally or whether, as the communists argued, a distinction should be made between the 'peace forces' and the 'imperialists', namely, the communist countries and the capitalist countries, particularly the United States. When a huge number of delegates were endorsed for that year's conference who were largely supportive of the communist position, JSP and Sōhyō withdrew from Gensuikyō and established their own rival federation. This created a major rift in the movement, but peace has remained a powerful political force in Japan. Even the LDP has had to align itself with the movement's goals at times, when its continuing support for the US alliance makes this possible. Both national and regional LDP politicians have supported Gensuikyō in different forms.⁴⁰

By the 1970s the JSP had given up hope of ever forming a government in its own right and had settled into permanent opposition. This presented the party with a dilemma that Steven Reed summarizes as follows: 'the opposition can influence policy only by cooperating with the LDP, but cooperating blurs their image in the electorate. They can influence policy but cannot get the electoral

39 C. S. Schieder, 'Demanding Publics: Women and Activism', in Coates, Fraser, and Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture*, pp. 210–18.

40 G. O. Totten and T. Kawakami, 'Gensuikyō and the peace movement in Japan', *Asian Survey* 4 (1964), pp. 833–41.

credit for their policy successes.⁴¹ Peace and nuclear issues are a good example of this. Given the LDP's close links with the wartime leadership, the LDP's commitment to peace was obviously tenuous. Nevertheless, it managed to capitalize on popular peace sentiment in Japan by maintaining a vague, nationalistic commitment to peace and opposing nuclear weapons. With national political hegemony cut off to the progressive forces, one response which gained traction in the 1970s was progressive localism (*kakushin jichitai*). This joint strategy involving both the JSP and the JCP sought to capture elected local government positions for progressive candidates through coalitions that included one or both parties alongside other progressives. Intervening at the local level promised to address the many urban problems generated by rapid economic growth, including pollution, housing shortages, and traffic congestion.

By April 1975, more than 20 per cent of the 642 mayors and 10 of the 47 governors were nominally 'progressive'.⁴² The administration of Tokyo Governor Minobe Ryōkichi (1904–84) between 1967 and 1979 represents the peak of the movement. Elected in 1967, Minobe had a radical background and emphasized participatory democracy within metropolitan politics. In 1967, he established the Pollution Research Office in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and passed the strictest pollution prevention ordinance in the country in 1969. The Pollution Research Office under Kainō Michitaka developed the 1969 ordinance and produced a report, 'Pollution and Tokyo City', which addressed the causes and prevention of pollution, suggested regulatory measures, and specifically encouraged civic activism as a response to pollution. The report influenced local governments across Japan. The 1969 ordinance, which forswore the commitment to 'harmonization' of industry and residents' needs in existing environmental pollution control legislation in favour of strict emissions standards, became the minimum acceptable standard by the time national regulations were imposed by the so-called Pollution Diet of 1970.⁴³

The Decline of Social Democracy

In 1981, LDP Prime Minister Suzuki Zenkō (1911–2004) established Rinchō (Provisional Commission on Administrative Reform). Its stated purpose was

41 S. R. Reed, 'The changing fortunes of Japan's progressive governors', *Asian Survey* 26, 4 (1986), pp. 452–65 at p. 453.

42 A. Rix, 'Tokyo's Governor Minobe and progressive local politics in Japan', *Asian Survey* 15, 6 (1975), pp. 530–42 at p. 530.

43 S. Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), pp. 34, 38.

to reduce the national deficit attributed to government rice subsidies, the national health insurance scheme, and the national railways. It laid the foundations for the privatization of major nationalized industries, including Japan National Railways (JNR), Nippon Telephone and Telegraph (NTT), and Japan Tobacco and Salt. There was considerable resistance to privatization within the bureaucracy and the LDP as well as from unions, but the executive pushed through the reforms in the name of improving government efficiency. A further unstated purpose was to destroy the public sector unions which provided the basis of electoral support to the JSP.

The privatization of JNR had the most significant impact on the left unions. In 1981, JNR had 401,000 employees, of whom 254,000 were members of the largest union, Kokurō, and a further 47,100 were members of the next largest union, Dōrō. Both unions were affiliated to the leftist union federation Sōhyō. In 1985, the previously militant Dōrō declared its support for the government's reform programme in a deal that saved most of its members' jobs. In July 1986, the LDP won a landslide election, thwarting any possibility of the JSP moderating the privatization legislation. Some Kokurō leaders decided to support the reform in an attempt to save the union, but militants rejected it. The moderates then left to organize a new union, Tessan Sōren. The JNR group now had three unions: Kokurō remained but with a reduced membership of just 33,000; the breakaway Tessan Rōren had 15,000; and JR Sōren, created by the Tetsurō–Dōrō alliance reached 140,000, having absorbed many former Kokurō members. The struggle extended the company union structure from the private sector to one of the remaining bulwarks of the left-wing union movement and undermined the JSP's electoral base.⁴⁴

Like the railway unions, the teachers' union Nikkyōso suffered major decline in the 1980s, with coverage falling to 48.5 per cent of teachers by 1987. Critics of Nikkyōso wanted to reform education to make it more individualistic, emphasizing creativity, 'internationalization', and liberalization. LDP politician Nakasone Yasuhiro (1918–2019) formed Rinkyōshin (Council for Education Reform) to undertake a review of the educational system. The reform proposals split teachers, with the left opposing them while others saw merit in some of them. Hoping to avoid the fate of the railway unions by co-operating with the Ministry of Education, Nikkyōso supported the dissolution of the socialist trade union federation Sōhyō into

44 C. Weathers, 'Restructuring labour unions in Japan's national railways', *Japanese Studies* 12 (1992), pp. 19–28.

a new union federation, Rengō (Japanese Trade Union Conference) in 1989. The formation of Rengō cemented the long-term right-wing strategy of enterprise unionism and management-friendly labour relations. Broadbent characterizes Rengō as 'a national union centre concerned more with the profitability and productivity of the companies it belongs to than the effect of dismissal on workers' livelihoods'.⁴⁵ Sōhyō's dissolution into Rengō in 1989 gave it 8 million members, making it the third-largest trade union federation in the world. Nevertheless, this represented just 17 per cent of the total Japanese workforce. This was a federation primarily for elite male, full-time workers with good working conditions and benefits who work in the electrical, automotive, iron and steel, and telecommunications industries.

While the destruction of the public sector unions was to have a decisive impact on the JSP's long-term electoral prospects, in July 1989, the party's first woman chair, Doi Takako (1928–2014), led the party to a surprise victory in the Upper House elections. In a winning formula dubbed 'the Madonna strategy', Doi supported a large number of women candidates. After the election the JSP had fourteen women Upper House Diet members. Doi became one of the best-known politicians in Japan and helped to briefly restore her party's fortunes, making considerable gains in the following year's Lower House elections. Unlike most JSP leaders, who had a background in the union movement, Doi was a distinguished legal scholar. As a politician she devoted herself to environmental and foreign affairs and supported a variety of social movements, including the movement for the human rights of Japan's ethnic Korean minority. She was not part of an established faction in the JSP, which left her free as leader to develop her own charismatic authority. In this sense, she pioneered the charismatic form of political leadership that has become more important than factional loyalties in both conservative and opposition parties since the 1990s.

In 1986, the 50th party congress approved a new basic policy document known as the New Declaration which replaced its longstanding Road to Socialism in Japan. The new document marked a departure from Marxism–Leninism. It advocated a politics based on parliamentary democracy, welfare state liberalism, and the peace constitution. The 1989 election results were also a success for Rengō, which had run candidates in close alliance with the JSP. However, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new world order based on unipolar American supremacy posed challenges for the

45 K. Broadbent, 'Shin-Rengo: recent developments in the Japanese trade-union movement', *Japanese Studies* 10, 2 (1990), pp. 41–7.

socialists and their longstanding commitment to the constitution and neutralism. The JSP voted against a peacekeeping operations bill which would have allowed Japanese Self-Defence Force troops to take part in the first Gulf War in 1990–1. Doi's leadership can be seen as an attempt by the JSP to respond to the dip in its organizational vote in the declining union movement by becoming a movement-based party and by appealing to women voters through the Madonna strategy.⁴⁶ It was the party's last-ditch attempt to stave off its imminent decline.

In 1991, Japan entered a period of economic stagnation, with growth averaging 1.2 per cent between 1991 and 1998, the lowest rate of all the advanced capitalist economies. In 1997 and 1998, growth entered negative territory. In the Lower House election of 1993 both major parties – the governing LDP and the JSP – suffered major losses. The upsetting of the political landscape, which had remained relatively stable since 1955, produced splits in both parties and multiple short-lived parties emerged. The voting behaviour of the Japanese electorate became increasingly fickle as old loyalties based on organizational politics frayed. After extensive negotiations, a coalition government was formed under Hosokawa Morihiro, but this coalition quickly collapsed. The result was an extraordinary coalition formed in June 1994 which included the LDP, the JSP, and the New Party Sakigake.

The JSP entered into this coalition with its historic rivals when it was offered the prime ministership, making Murayama Tomiichi the first socialist prime minister since 1947–8. In these unprecedented circumstances, Murayama capitulated on core JSP neutralist policies, recognizing the constitutionality of the Self-Defence Forces and offering to support the US–Japan Security Treaty. This caused outrage among many JSP members. In August 1995, Murayama pacified them somewhat by issuing the first official apology by a Japanese prime minister for Japanese aggression during the Pacific War. The JSP lost seats, however, in the July 1995 House of Councillors election, and Murayama resigned in January the following year. The JSP renamed itself the *Shakai Minshutō* (Social Democratic Party of Japan, SDPJ) as part of an attempted regrouping.⁴⁷ The party then split in September 1996, when younger socialist Diet members left to join the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). By 1996, the socialists were decimated as an electoral force and a new 'liberal' party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), emerged as Japan's

46 J. A. A. Stockwin, 'On trying to move mountains: the political career of Doi Takako', *Japan Forum* 6 (1994), pp. 21–34.

47 The party had already changed its official English name to the SDPJ in 1991, but the original Japanese name remained unchanged until 1996.

major opposition party. The DPJ was a hybrid beast. It incorporated former JSP politicians, former democratic socialists (a rightward split from the JSP in 1960), and disgruntled former LDP politicians, such as powerbroker Ozawa Ichirō. The party formed a government in its own right after winning the 2009 Lower House elections. Its leader at the time of the 2009 victory, Hatoyama Yukio (1947–), embodies the party's convoluted political history. He is the scion of a major political family. His grandfather Hatoyama Ichirō (1883–1959) was founder and first president of the LDP and prime minister from 1954 to 1956. Hatoyama Yukio was first elected to the Diet for the LDP in 1986. He left in 1993 during a tumultuous era for the party to form the New Party Sakigake with another DPJ founder, Kan Naoto (1946–). Yet while the DPJ is often framed as a 'liberal' opposition party vis-à-vis the LDP, it cannot be considered a 'left' party. Many of its economic positions were to the right of the LDP.

From Social Democracy to Social Movement Society

The decline of parliamentary social democracy does not mean that the polity it helped to build has been entirely eroded. LDP dominance in Japan meant that social democratic political parties were unable to act as a conduit for concerns associated with the 'new social movements' which emerged from the 1970s over issues such as environmental pollution, women's rights, and nuclear power. These movements tended to position themselves as 'citizens movements' (*shimin undō*), making a virtue of their independence from both left- and right-wing political parties. Their successes, such as during the anti-pollution movement of the late 1960s, have been legislated by LDP governments, further negating the role of the JSP.

The DPJ's ascendancy in 2009 exemplifies the growing importance of social movements as opposed to trade unions and party organizations as a progressive force in Japanese society. It also highlights the contradictions between social movement politics and a fragmented electoral landscape. DPJ Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio resigned less than a year after his party's sweeping victory. One reason for his downfall was his challenge to Japan's dependence on the United States. He was the first prime minister to openly question the need for Japan to continue to finance and construct America's empire of bases on Japanese soil. His equivocal stance on the construction of a new US military base at Henoko in Okinawa, billed a 'base relocation' by proponents, earned him the ire of the American and Japanese defence policy

establishment. His successor Kan Naoto similarly lasted just one year in office. He was brought down by pro-nuclear elements in his party (which includes representatives whose base is in conservative electric power unions) and the LDP due to his support for the anti-nuclear movement after the March 2011 disaster. Kan implemented some meaningful policy responses to the Fukushima nuclear crisis, such as a feed-in-tariff to support renewables. He also took decisive action in ordering a halt at the Hamaoka nuclear reactor and implementing stricter safety tests for Japan's ageing nuclear reactor fleet after the disaster, thereby consolidating the victories of the largest social movement since the 1960 Anpo struggle.

When Kan was replaced by the pro-nuclear Noda Yoshihiko (1957–), however, it seemed that the coalition of interests which support nuclear power in Japan – known as the nuclear village – was back in control of the Japanese government. Noda's support for a consumption tax hike split his party. With the DPJ divided, Abe Shinzō (1954–) led the LDP back into government in December 2012. The LDP coalition government has continued to win strong majorities, abetted by low voter turnout. Nevertheless, social movements continue to exercise an influence on policy in Japan. After the Fukushima disaster, powerful grassroots movements drove a wedge into the divided political establishment, prompting far-reaching changes in energy policy whose outcome is uncertain.⁴⁸ The LDP under Abe trod a careful line on nuclear policy, supporting the restarting of Japan's nuclear reactors while avoiding making it an election issue.

As political scientist Kondō Yasushi has observed, in Japan today the media speculates about the emergence of a 'liberal block' able to take on the LDP, but the term 'social democracy' has disappeared. While the DPJ splinter party Minshintō retains the support of some trade unions, it can hardly be described as a social democratic party.⁴⁹ The SDPJ is a negligible presence in the National Diet, though it has some presence in local government. Politics continues to be dominated by a conservative alliance of politicians, bureaucrats, right-wing unions, and the business class. Where social democracy has seen successes, these successes have been institutionalized under conservative leadership. Progressive municipal politics represents an important part of this legacy, with much of Japan's welfare state infrastructure administered at the local government level where the social democratic

48 A. Brown, *Anti-Nuclear Protest in Post-Fukushima Tokyo: Power Struggles* (London: Routledge, 2018).

49 Kondō Yasushi, *Shakai minshu shugi wa ikinokoreruka. Seitō soshiki no jōken* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 2016), p. 1.

parties remain influential. At the national level, the politicians and union leaders who are the inheritors of the social democratic movement of the twentieth century tend to operate within a broader social movement society. These movements no longer articulate a classical social democratic vision, but they continue to seek ways to confront growing social inequality, to oppose social exclusion, and to struggle for lasting peace in East Asia.

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The Second International: 1889–1914

JEAN-NUMA DUCANGE

‘The Internationale/Will be the human race.’ When Eugène Pottier wrote the refrain of his famous *Internationale* in 1871, the prospects for socialists looked rather bleak. The Paris Commune had just been crushed, and a persecuted and divided International Workingmen’s Association was already losing momentum a few years before its final collapse. But by the time Pierre Degeyter set Pottier’s words to music in 1888, a new period was under way. Just a few months later, in July 1889, the founding congress of the organization known to history as the ‘Second International’¹ was held in Paris. After several abortive initiatives across the 1880s, in 1889 delegates from numerous countries met to form a new international that would rally the forces of socialism, initially within Europe alone. But there were already signs of the divisions to come: indeed, there were two competing meetings in Paris, with one (under the sway of British delegates) upholding a more gradualist perspective, and the other (centred on the German social democrats) more of a revolutionary, Marxist one. The latter soon prevailed, when a reunification congress was held in Brussels in 1891.²

Twenty years later, on the eve of the First World War, the parties belonging to this International could together boast an estimated 3 million members (the IWMA had never had more than 150,000). The ‘Second International’ was thus of unique historical importance: for the first time,

1 J. Droz (ed.), *Histoire générale du socialisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977); *Geschichte der Zweiten Internationale* (Moscow: Progress, 1983), 2 vols. (translation of the 1959 Soviet history of the Second International, a dogmatic but well-informed work); G. Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

2 See the multilingual (English, French, German) collection of sources *Histoire de la deuxième Internationale* (Geneva: Minkoff, 1976–85), 9 vols.; G. Haupt, *La deuxième Internationale, 1889–1914. Étude critique des sources, essai bibliographique* (Paris: Mouton, 1964).

millions of workers identified with socialist parties bound together by a workers' International. Doubtless, these were rather varied organizations, structured in rather loose fashion. But, apart from the anarchist elements, which were expelled in 1896, the International's sections all shared a common perspective of social change (fighting for social legislation, for instance, through a reduction of working hours). While sharp differences emerged (notably over the question of whether to pursue radical upheaval through revolution, or else change through stages),³ the International remained a single united body until 1914. All these parties faced common challenges, such as the problem of how to combine their national affinities with their proud internationalism – this being a major question for parties that had sunk strong roots among the masses from the 1890s onward.⁴ In this period, internationalism translated into anti-militarist and pacifist positions, against the risk of a drive to war. At first the colonial question drew little attention, but this issue gradually became more present in the International's life, as did the question of 'working women' and the specificities of their struggles.

In seeking to understand the multiple issues at stake in the International's history, it may be useful to schematically divide it into three phases. The first ran from 1889 to 1900, when Marxist and revolutionary perspectives dominated and socialism seemed to be a concrete possibility, within the socialist parties' reach. The second ran from 1900 to 1905, and instead revealed their hesitations over what path to follow, as the capitalist system held up better than expected; in these same years, Eduard Bernstein's theses 'revised' the revolutionary road and advocated a gradualist perspective. The third period began with the Russian Revolution of 1905. This event shook established assumptions, drawing attention towards the east and, more generally 'the Orient' as a series of upheavals broke out beyond European shores. The year 1914, in which the large majority of socialists rallied to their own states' war efforts, clearly marked an important moment of rupture. This brought the mounting prospect of a split between supporters of the war effort and more internationalist forces who took a stance against their own governments.

In this chapter, we will take account of the multiple debates that shaped the International's life, but also the diverse situations of which it consisted. To this end we will examine the importance of both certain core contexts

3 G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought: The Second International 1889–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1956).

4 P. Dogliani, 'The Fate of Socialist Internationalism', in G. Sluga and P. Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 38–60.

(like the German Social Democratic Party) and (supposed) ‘peripheries’, especially outside Europe. If we want to properly understand the International’s history, we have to decentre our approach, and avoid the idea that ‘everything happened in Europe’. Just as labour history has taken to a global approach,⁵ we should do the same when we write the history of the Second International.

First, we will try to understand how far the International did indeed have a ‘centre’ or a plurality of models. Looking beyond its top leaders and apparatus, we also need to understand the experiences of members who took part in the International’s everyday life, by looking at the practices they pursued as militants. The successes and limitations of the International’s global activity (especially in terms of gender, in what was a very heavily male socialist movement), over almost three decades, also require examination. Lastly, we need a specific study of the nationalities and colonial question, and, more generally, of the question of racism. This will help us to better understand the ambivalences – and, at times, the pioneering role – of an international body which, though largely dominated by European debates, did gradually open up to the world.

The International’s European Core and the Question of ‘Models’

Was there any ‘model party’ or ‘organizing centre’ such as would provide a window onto the general *modus operandi* of the International founded in 1889? On this point, we should distance ourselves from those approaches which graft later realities onto the situation that existed in the late nineteenth century. There was never a single predominant model, in the manner of Moscow’s role in the Third International founded in 1919.

Nonetheless, one organization, a source of both admiration and criticism, did occupy a unique place in the International: namely, the German Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD).⁶ As well as taking the initiative in founding the International, the SPD enjoyed considerable ideological and theoretical prestige therein. The man nicknamed the ‘pope of Marxism’ – Friedrich Engels’ long-time secretary Karl Kautsky (1859–1938) – embodied this party’s culture, which was admired

5 M. van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

6 R. Hoffrogge, *Sozialismus und Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland und Österreich. Von den Anfängen bis 1914* (Stuttgart: Schmetterling, 2017).

across Europe.⁷ His review *Die Neue Zeit* (founded in 1883) was a demonstration of its influence and prestige. Tellingly, German was the main language one had to master if one sought to intervene in the International's theoretical debates. At a parallel, political level, August Bebel (1840–1913) – originally a joiner who toiled in his own workshop – was the SPD's party president, symbolizing this organization's rootedness among the popular classes.⁸ The SPD was strongly bound to working-class life (especially in industrial regions like the Ruhr and Saxony), thanks to both the party's own organization and the trade unions and co-operatives linked to it. In 1912, the SPD would even become the biggest party in the Reichstag. Hence, German-speakers would take up the predominant role at the International's congresses from 1889 to 1914. Indeed, they were responsible for the invention of 'Marxism' itself. This term emerged in the 1880s, in reference to an ideology which drew on Marx and Engels' texts to provide militants with a toolkit for analysing society and politics. Though this Marxism was rather schematic, this also allowed it to enjoy a far from negligible spread among the popular classes.⁹ The SPD moreover suffered next to no competition within the German workers' movement, having already marginalized anarchist currents in the 1890s. Indeed, there was no other European country where such a structured conception of socialism developed, which was then so widely circulated internationally. Despite the major tensions and internal differences that increasingly separated revolutionaries (Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin) from more 'revisionist' figures (around Bernstein), the SPD remained a single party until the war.

Yet it would be mistaken to exaggerate German social democracy's centrality to the wider International.¹⁰ The British case is symptomatic in this regard. In Britain, the development of an independent labour movement as early as the 1830s–40s, with the trade unions and Chartism, made British activist circles a relatively difficult terrain for Marxism to permeate, even despite Marx and Engels' early contacts with the Fraternal Democrats, and attempts to found a socialist party, such as the Social Democratic Federation.

7 J. Rojahn, T. Schelz, and H.-J. Steinberg (eds.), *Marxismus und Demokratie. Karl Kautskys Bedeutung in der sozialistischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1991); B. Lewis (ed.), *Karl Kautsky on Democracy and Republicanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

8 J. Schmidt, *August Bebel. Kaiser der Arbeiter* (Zurich: Rotpunktverlag, 2013).

9 A. Bonnell, *Red Banners, Books and Beer Mugs: The Mental World of German Social Democrats, 1863–1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

10 J. Rojahn, 'War die deutsche Sozialdemokratie ein Modell für die Parteien der Zweiten Internationale?', *IWK* 27, 3 (1991), pp. 291–302.

Only belatedly was the Labour Party founded in 1906, and even this upon trade union initiative. The ideology that coloured the Labour Party was distant from Marxism (not least given its Fabian inheritance), even if its immediate demands were similar to those of other parties within the International.¹¹ The words ‘trade unionism’ were even seen as pejorative; this term was used (in English) by part of the Russian social democrats to refer to a primitive state of working-class consciousness, which had to be transcended.

The French case also exhibits real distance from the SPD ‘model’. Given France’s long revolutionary history, and especially the decisive event that was the Paris Commune of 1871 (popularized by the analysis Marx provided in his *The Civil War in France*), throughout its history the French socialist movement preserved particular characteristics of its own.¹² French socialism also inherited the rich body of work by ‘utopian socialists’, while figures like Louis Blanc and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon were also widely read and respected. While there was a Marxist current around Jules Guesde,¹³ there were also strong national traditions (especially in the context of the sharp Germanophobia that followed the war of 1870) which delayed the introduction of ‘German-style’ Marxism to France. There also developed a strong revolutionary-sindicalist tendency, hostile to political parties. For many French leaders like Jean Jaurès, socialism was an extension of republicanism. From their point of view, Marxism represented a valuable analytical tool, but the model offered by German social democracy was out of step with French realities. The International’s congresses were punctuated by debates over these same questions, in turn giving a more relative dimension to the hegemony exercised by the SPD, which never really convinced wide layers of the French socialist movement.

The history of the socialist movements in south European countries also demands that we see the SPD’s hegemony in more relative terms. For instance, Marxist socialism faced major difficulties sinking roots in Spain.¹⁴ The national question remained ever-present here: indeed, in Catalonia the Spanish state appeared as an outside force. This translated into the

11 E. Jousse, ‘Chronique d’un non-lieu. Le marxisme en Grande-Bretagne’, *Cahiers d’histoire. Revue d’histoire critique* 114 (2011), pp. 73–97; R. McKibbin, ‘Why was there no Marxism in Great Britain?’, *English Historical Review* 391 (1984), pp. 297–331.

12 J.-N. Ducange, *The French Revolution and Social Democracy: The Transmission of History and Its Political Uses in Germany and Austria, 1889–1934* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

13 J.-N. Ducange, *Jules Guesde: The Birth of Marxism in France* (New York: Palgrave, 2020).

14 P. Ribas, *Aproximación a la historia del marxismo español (1869–1939)* (Madrid: Ediciones Endymion, 1990).

development of strong anarchist and Catalan-autonomist currents within the workers' movement. Engels (allied to Paul Lafargue, who was himself sent as an emissary to that country) tried to counter this tendency and sow Marxist ideas on Spanish soil. A Spanish Democratic Socialist Workers' Party was founded in 1879; initially a very minor force, it gradually managed to take on more structure, as it was refounded in 1888 with the creation of Pablo Iglesias and José Mesa's Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). In July 1889, this party would be present in Paris for the Second International's founding congress. Yet it proved unable to resist the rising strength of anarchism, and it remained relatively marginal. Spanish socialism is an interesting example of transnational history: the PSOE's ideology was heavily dependent on French Guesdism, which was, in a sense, 'exported' to Spain.¹⁵ As for Italy, where there was greater industrial development than in Spain, the strong competition coming from the revolutionary syndicalists was an important part of the picture, like in France. Also worth noting, in the Italian case, is a certain socialist presence in intellectual circles, as symbolized by Antonio Labriola.

Rather different was the picture in the East. It is difficult to define what exactly 'eastern Europe' meant, at the turn of the twentieth century; many countries that are now independent were, in this period, dominated by (and integrated into) empires, as in the cases of today's Poland, Czech Republic, etc.; other countries, such as Romania and Hungary, had very different borders. That said, their socialist movements did share many peculiar traits. Most, like Russian social democracy, were imbued with 'Erfurtianism',¹⁶ meaning that their political line and organizational model drew on the SPD and its 1891 Erfurt programme. Added to that were the dynamics proper to regional-level 'model' parties, with different structures corresponding to the multiple nationalities they encompassed. Two examples are particularly worth noting in this regard. The Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party (RSDRP) founded in 1898 would for many years integrate both the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL, a force hostile to Polish independence) and the Jewish Bund. Yet more important was the case of Austrian social democracy, which headed a *Gesamtpartei* including six branches representing different nationalities. This Austrian case has even been referred to as a 'Little International'. Thus, in a sense, there were

15 M. Ralle, 'La réception du marxisme par le socialisme espagnole. Vulgarisation et continuité des cultures ouvrières anti-autoritaires', *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique* 114 (2011), pp. 51–71.

16 L. T. Lih, *Lenin* (New York: Reaktion, 2011).

multiple little internationals within one big one. The organizational question was, in fact, intimately linked to the peculiar configuration of nationalities within the International. For example, over a long period the Czechs were totally integrated into Austrian social democracy. But starting at the beginning of the new century, the 'Czechoslavs' became increasingly autonomous, and definitively so after 1910.¹⁷ This helped to prompt concrete changes in the distribution of mandates at the International's congresses: and it was a phenomenon that gave increasing visibility to national minorities within the various Empires.

Lastly, the Americas represented a particular set of circumstances. Even though the United States was already by the end of the nineteenth century one of the main poles of global capitalism, this country had a relatively marginal place within the Second International. Indeed, the weak implantation of US socialism was itself a subject of debate within the International (echoing Werner Sombart's 1906 book *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?*). Initially, emigrants crossing the Atlantic would play a major role in introducing socialism to the United States. Many German (but also Russian, Polish, French, Irish, etc.) immigrants arriving from the 1850s onward brought their socialist beliefs with them, before another millions-strong wave of immigrants arrived from the 1880s onward. But the early existence of a non-socialist craft unionism, with the creation of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1886, the sharp divisions among the United States' meagre socialist forces, and the presence of anarchism, all held back the development of a large social democratic party such as existed in west European countries.¹⁸ Despite everything, a Socialist Party of America was established in 1901, allowing US socialism to appear as a more credible force at the International's congresses; it made a particular impression at the Amsterdam Congress in 1904. By 1912, the party counted around 118,000 members, and by this point it had also elected some local officials, albeit only one member of Congress. In parallel to this, there was also a certain momentum behind Eugene Debs and the Industrial Workers of the World. As for the rest of the Americas, the early emergence of an Argentine socialist movement deserves particular mention. The first Argentine Socialist Party was founded in 1896;¹⁹ in the International, it made particularly regular interventions on questions related to migration.

17 J. S. Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

18 I. Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897–1912* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2005).

19 L. Poy, *El Partido Socialista argentino, 1896–1912. Una historia social y política* (Buenos Aires: Ariadna Ediciones, 2020).

The International's Practices and Places

In this period, the International enjoyed a great wealth of theoretical debates, as the adjectives 'socialist' and 'Marxist' encompassed multiple political-ideological identities. Yet a focus on this theoretical aspect ought not to be sufficient reason to neglect a study of the concrete practices and imaginaries that existed among socialist militants. It can sometimes be difficult to get a sense of militants' day-to-day experience. But we can at least reconstruct the activity of the 'intermediate cadres'²⁰ of the organizations that developed within the Second International's ranks.

The International's congresses were the main occasions when delegates from across Europe – and later, the wider world – would meet. But this did



Fig. 12.1 Group picture in Bendlikon on the occasion of an excursion as part of the congress of the Second International, Zurich, 1893: from left to right, Simon Ferdinand (son-in-law of August Bebel), Frieda Simon, Clara Zetkin, Friedrich Engels, Julie Bebel, August Bebel, Ernst Schattner, Regine Bernstein, and Eduard Bernstein. (Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv, Zurich.)

20 P. Pasteur, *Pratiques politiques et militantes de la social-démocratie autrichienne 1888–1934* (Paris: Belin, 2003).

not only provide a space where delegates from the various parties met to discuss this or that point of their programmatic orientation. The congresses were also an opportunity to express a 'demonstration culture', with a whole set of rituals accompanying the staging of the congress.²¹ First of all, local circumstances were very important, and even went some way to influencing the debates themselves. Indeed, a considerable number of British delegates attended the London Congress in 1896; the same was true four years later with the large French presence at the Paris Congress of 1900. Delegates took to the podium to address a sizeable audience, with an over-representation of whichever nation was hosting the congress. Alongside the debates proper, there was also a tradition of holding parades and demonstrations in the city where the congress took place. This was an opportunity for the International to show off its strength, the roots it had sunk, and its diversity. When the congress was held in the British capital, socialist groups of all nationalities paraded through the streets of London, prompting widespread press commentary. For many of the delegates who attended these congresses, it was their first proper trip abroad. With the exception of the top leaders of these parties (Jean Jaurès, August Bebel, etc.) and exiles from repressed parties (Lenin, Trotsky, etc.), very few delegates would have had the opportunity to venture beyond their homelands before they took part in a congress of the International. This was especially true of those from working-class backgrounds.

The Basel Congress of November 1912 is emblematic of how important these rituals could be.²² Situated at the crossroads of Europe, this Swiss city was chosen at a moment when the Balkan wars were threatening the continent's stability. Basel city hall agreed to the congress taking place there and decided to request the church authorities' permission for a demonstration which would precede the congress. Thus, a cathedral played host to the International's delegates. As the delegations arrived, large processions took form, representing multiple nationalities. They paraded back and forth throughout the city in a display of the considerable strength the various parties collectively represented. The march through the streets of Basel ended in a great rally for peace in the cathedral; and at the end of the

21 K. Callahan, *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914* (Leicester: Troubador, 2010); P. Alayrac, *L'Internationale au milieu du gué. De l'internationalisme socialiste au congrès de Londres (1896)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018).

22 E. Marcobelli, *Internationalism toward Diplomatic Crisis: The Second International and French, German and Italian Socialists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

procession, the bells of Basel cathedral rang out.²³ Alongside the organization of the congress itself, there was also a wider set of activities designed for the delegates. For instance, local guides were produced, encouraging delegates to visit famous historic sites in the city concerned. Thus, the archives of the Vienna Congress (supposed to be held in August 1914, but cancelled due to the outbreak of the First World War) illustrated the particular concern devoted to hosting delegates, and showing them the city and its symbols.

These international practices should not, however, take away from what remained the most visible and widely invoked means of collective mobilization, most conforming to the ideology of the International's member parties, namely, the strike. Indeed, over the 1880s – a decade that saw considerable growth in the International's parties – this particular working-class practice took centre stage. Strikes are hardly the only means through which workers can enter into struggle and advance their demands: indeed, labour historians have highlighted a number of other practices – including less visible ones like the refusal of work and deliberate go-slows – which also represent important expressions of protest. But strikes were on the rise during this period, and especially at the beginning of the twentieth century. The International's parties had no unanimous perspective on how the strike weapon should be used and what its significance was; in this sense, they were continuing debates that had already begun in the IWMA, albeit in new circumstances. For example, in homage to the strike that had been repressed at Chicago's Haymarket Square in 1886, the International chose to make 1 May a day of struggle and demand-raising. In 1889, the International decided 'to organize a great international demonstration, so that in all countries and all cities, on the appointed day, the toiling masses shall demand of the State authorities the legal reduction of the working day to eight hours'. But differences emerged over whether 1 May should be made into a *strike day* specifically.

An especially important strike wave showed both the significance of this phenomenon and divergences over its political meaning. In January 1905, the Russian Revolution triggered a strike wave that spread not only across Russia but also to Western countries. In Germany, Rosa Luxemburg called for the 'mass strike' (*Massenstreik*) to be made into a major tool of proletarian mobilization; but the trade-union leadership, in the person of Carl Legien, wanted to limit strikes to the narrow terrain of trade union demands alone.

23 G. Haupt (ed.), *Congrès International extraordinaire, Bâle, 24–25 novembre 1912* (Geneva: Minkoff Reprints, 1980), p. 32.

As for revolutionary syndicalism, most present in France and Italy, it considered the 'general strike' the embryo of the future society to which proletarians aspired.²⁴ But a figure like Rosa Luxemburg rejected the revolutionary syndicalist perspective: the *Massenstreik*, unlike the general strike, had to be properly combined with political action.²⁵ Hence, there was no consensus over how strikes should be used, and what their meaning was.

Alongside these practices of protest, it is also worth noting the importance of militant ritual. The history of culture and the collective imaginary emphasizes funerals as a key moment of nineteenth-century political sociabilities.²⁶ Indeed, we can see that from the first half of that century, socialist leaders' funerals saw vast gatherings of militants, occasions that displayed the growing power of the workers' movement. Such was the case at the 1837 burial of Filippo Buonarroti (a comrade of Gracchus Babeuf's during the French Revolution) in Paris. Over six decades later, when Wilhelm Liebknecht died in 1900, an extraordinary procession of worker-militants paraded through Berlin, crossing through all of the working-class neighbourhoods in order to show off the SPD's strength in the German capital. At the end of the march, numerous representatives of the International's sections in different countries addressed the crowd, and their speeches were published in the German press. Thus, an outright 'mini-congress' met in Berlin in front of tens of thousands of social democratic militants and sympathizers. The socialist press across Europe paid tribute to Liebknecht.²⁷

The International's congresses could also be the site of tributes to great figures who had recently passed away. For example, at the London Congress in 1896, numerous portraits of Friedrich Engels (who had died the previous year) were present in the hall, in homage to his life and works. Engels' name was often invoked during the congress proceedings, as a way of adding legitimacy to this or that argument. Bebel's death in 1913 also prompted a large number of gatherings and tributes, allowing the socialist parties to vaunt their internationalist unity just one year before the outbreak of the First World War.

24 K. Ch. Führer, *Carl Legien 1861–1920. Ein Gewerkschafter im Kampf um ein 'möglichst gutes Leben' für alle Arbeiter* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2009).

25 P. Hudis, A. Fair-Schulz, and W. Pelz (eds.), *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, vol. III, *Political Writings 1. On Revolution: 1897–1905* (London: Verso, 2020).

26 E. Fureix, *La France des larmes. Mort et politique à l'âge romantique (1814–1840)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2009).

27 W. Schröder, *Wilhelm Liebknecht. Soldat der Revolution, Parteiführer, Parlamentarier* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 2012); M. L. Hughes, 'Splendid demonstrations: the political funerals of Kaiser Wilhelm I and Wilhelm Liebknecht', *Central European History* 41/42 (2008), pp. 229–53.

Organizational Successes and Failures

There was never any programmatic text that clearly defined the specific tasks which were to be fulfilled at the International level and by the national sections themselves. Overall, the International operated rather like a parliament of socialist parties, a flexible structure that aimed to co-ordinate their efforts. In this it had real successes, but also failures.

Right at the beginning of the twentieth century, as national sections in many countries were becoming sizeable forces – and with a number of organizational and strategic questions still unresolved – the International decided to create a co-ordinating body, the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) founded at the Paris Congress of 1900.²⁸ The ISB was conceived as a permanent central organ, and its headquarters were established in the Maison du peuple in Brussels. Each nationality would send two delegates there, regularly; overall co-ordination was entrusted to an executive committee run by Belgian socialists. The Belgian socialist leader Emile Vandervelde was its president, while a secretariat took on responsibility for most of its tasks: from 1905 onward the co-ordinator of this secretariat was Camille Huysmans. Following this, in 1904, an Interparliamentary Socialist Commission (ISC) to co-ordinate the activity of socialist parliamentary groups was set up. Structures of this type multiplied, for instance, the Youth International founded by Karl Liebknecht in 1907.

While the national sections remained autonomous, the International sought to encourage unity among socialist organizations in countries where socialist forces remained divided. For instance, the International's efforts played a decisive role in encouraging the French socialist unification of 1905.²⁹ The International's Amsterdam Congress the previous year had passed a motion calling on France's two separate socialist parties to unite. Thanks to this action – and militants' desire for unity – in May 1905 the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO, Parti Socialiste) was founded, putting an end to thirty years of divisions among French socialists. The land of the 'Great Revolution' could now boast of a united socialist organization. This unification is surely to be chalked up on the positive side of the International's balance sheet.

We could also point to many other successes resulting from the activity of the Socialist International's member parties. In many countries, social

28 A. Benedetti, 'Le Bureau Socialiste International face à la question coloniale. Les difficiles chemins d'un traitement supranational, 1900–1914', *Cahiers Jaurès* 3 (2020), pp. 27–45.

29 G. Candar and V. Duclert, *Jean Jaurès* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

legislation benefiting workers was making progress. As a whole, the chronology of its implementation corresponds to the rising strength and rootedness of socialist forces. Thus, each country's introduction of insurance compensation for workplace accidents was also part of a general movement visible in most industrialized countries. Preceded by both the German law of 1884 and the British Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897, the French law of 1898 in turn did much to inspire the Spanish and Belgian legislation passed in 1900 and 1903, respectively. This chronology corresponded to the growing membership numbers of the political organizations identifying with the Second International. The 1884 German legislation was passed by the Reichstag in the context of anti-socialist laws, and indeed was designed to further cut the ground from underneath the SPD's feet; the 1898 law in France came five years after an election in which, for the first time, socialists had sufficient numbers in the National Assembly (more than fifty MPs) to hope to impact national political life, having previously had an only very marginal position.

Nonetheless, even these successes, linked to the socialist parties' growing implantation, ought not to mislead us. The history of the Second International is also strewn with failures. First, because it could not claim to embody the whole organized workers' movement. Indeed, the anarchist tendency (representing a far from negligible number of militants in the Latin countries, as well as a few others such as the Netherlands) was expelled at the London Congress in 1896, and would henceforth develop in opposition to the socialist parties. As we have seen, the revolutionary syndicalists were highly influential in several countries, especially Latin ones.³⁰ But even more importantly, the International was unable to avert the splintering of several parties. While it did succeed in uniting the French socialists, it proved to be incapable of doing similar for the Russian social democrats. In 1903, that country's RSDRP divided between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, before it met with an irreparable split at the Prague Conference of 1912. The International was also unable to stop the Bulgarian socialists splintering into separate 'Narrow' and 'Broad' parties.

Lastly, the International had its 'oversights'. While the situation varied across countries, most socialist parties placed a priority on defending the interests of the industrial working class. Here, they counted on the

30 M. van der Linden and W. Thorpe, 'The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism', in M. van der Linden and W. Thorpe (eds.), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), pp. 1–24; R. Darlington, *Radical Unionism: The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013).

expectation that capitalist development would drive the creation of large concentrations of workers. So, despite the theoretical reflection and programmatic work on the peasant question that did take place in many countries (especially in eastern Europe, where the rural population remained in the majority), this remained a relatively secondary and little discussed issue. It drew greater attention in countries like France, which had a very large smallholding peasantry.³¹ But social democrats in Germany, such as Kautsky, held that the peasantry would also be affected by the tendency towards capitalist concentration (as he explained in his 1889 *The Agrarian Question*); thus, any concessions to small proprietors appeared as an obstacle to socialism's progress.

Another 'overlooked' group has drawn even more attention: women. Was the International a mainly masculine affair? At the most formal level, women did have every right to participate, and socialist programmes, following the example of the SPD's 1891 Erfurt programme, called for both legal and real equality. The first point of the Erfurt programme thus demanded 'Universal, equal, and direct suffrage with secret ballot in all elections, for all citizens of the Reich over the age of twenty, without distinction of sex,' while the fourth was yet more explicit, calling for the 'Abolition of all laws that place women at a disadvantage compared with men in matters of public or private law.' But in practice, women were heavily under-represented in the socialist parties. The International's great congresses were overwhelmingly male. There was even a rather deep-rooted anti-feminism in some socialist organizations. Thus, at the congress that founded the Austrian Social Democratic Party at Hainfeld in 1888, there was just a single woman delegate. The other delegates, all men, took it upon themselves to remove her from the proceedings, for they believed that a woman had no business taking part in a workers' congress. And while women did gradually make room for themselves, their demands often remained on the back burner. Thus, while on one occasion the French socialist MPs did present a bill to parliament demanding votes for women, once it had been rejected, the parliamentary group no longer upheld this demand. On the eve of the First World War, notwithstanding the emergence of figures like Hubertine Auclert, some 99 per cent of the French Parti Socialiste's members were men. The situation was, however, different in other countries, where the first feminist movements arose within a social democratic framework, while also preserving a certain autonomy.

31 See the introduction to J. Vigreux, *La faucille après le marteau. Le communisme aux champs dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2012).

Thus, in the SPD, Clara Zetkin managed to create a periodical dedicated to feminist questions, *Die Gleichheit* (*Equality*), and as part of this trend a Socialist Women's International was founded in Stuttgart in 1907.

Nationalisms, Colonialisms, Borders: Uncertain Territories

The International's proudly proclaimed international nature was confronted, both at a theoretical and at a practical level, by the nationalities question. Its scope ranged from the national minorities in the heart of the European empires, to the problems posed by colonialism.

Without doubt, internationalist slogans were a feature of every congress staged by the International: they would regularly appeal to proletarian brotherhood across national borders. But alongside these grand declarations, which served to galvanize militants, there were also a great variety of approaches to the national question.³² Indeed, not all socialists were convinced, for example, that it was important to champion the independence of oppressed countries. Poland provided a characteristic example. In 1896, a motion to the London Congress demanded independence for this country, which was at that time divided between three empires (with Russia occupying the largest share). But the most radical internationalists considered this demand mistaken: for Rosa Luxemburg, creating a new country would mean encouraging the growth of national feeling rather than class consciousness. Less radical than Luxemburg, but similarly unconvinced of the need to create new borders, were the Austrian social democratic theorists known as the Austromarxist school, around Karl Renner and Otto Bauer. They advocated a radical reform of Austria's multinational empire, through the recognition of a 'personal autonomy' that would allow each individual to declare themselves a member of a nationality within the wider empire. For Bauer, the nation was an ever-evolving historical actor, without fixed contours.³³ His theories would bear real influence. Certain compromises among central European nationalities – though they were not enough to prevent the Balkan Wars – were directly borrowed from Austromarxist theorists: the Moravian (1905) and Bukovinian (1910) compromises adopted the idea of constituting nations within an imperial framework.

The Second International period thus saw the elaboration of several projects to try to resolve conflicts between nationalities. One notable case

32 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

33 E. Czerwińska-Schupp, *Otto Bauer: Thinker and Politician* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

was the project for a Balkan federation. Christian Rakovsky was the brain behind this idea. A Bulgarian-born Romanian long exiled in western Europe, he had an expert knowledge of the national question.³⁴ In 1908, he penned a detailed project for a federal union of nations, a Balkan confederation designed to overcome the divisions that undermined relations between the various nationalities.³⁵ From 1910 onward, this project took on a more concrete dimension: at the Serbian Socialist Party's initiative, the socialist leaders of Turkey and the Balkans met in Belgrade for a 'first Balkan conference'. This gathering saw the outlining of a plan for a democratic federation of the Balkans, which would also serve as a counterweight to Russian power. The idea here was to create a political unit that would be able to stand up for itself, even when faced with the vast empires surrounding it. This confederation, which was to include Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro, would recognize the existence of each of these various peoples on its respective territory, while also making sure that everyone's rights would be respected. This project ultimately failed. But it was a telling expression of the desire to find solutions to the problems posed by the often-fraught coexistence of multiple nationalities.³⁶

More generally, although this problem was regularly *mentioned*, at first the International considered everything to do with ethnic and religious minorities a rather secondary question. Indeed, it had initially been imagined that all the problems linked to minorities and their fate would surely be resolved by the advent of socialism. In this view, social struggles would allow national antagonisms to be swept away. During the revolutions of 1848, Friedrich Engels had even spoken of 'non-historic peoples': various Slavic nations like the Czechs would, on this reading, ultimately integrate into the superior German culture. Many German-speaking social democrats would long consider it necessary for the 'small' nations of central Europe to assimilate, believing that these peoples had everything to gain from abandoning their particularisms and thus prioritizing the struggle on the 'class' terrain. The same logic applied to the especially complex case represented by Jews. Many social democratic leaders (especially in Germany, Austria, and Russia) were Jewish; themselves being fully assimilated, they did not consider it necessary

34 P. Broué, *Rakovski ou la révolution dans tous les pays* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); F. Conte, *Christian Rakovski (1873–1941): A Political Biography* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1989).

35 N. Pitsos, "'Peuples des Balkans, fédérez-vous!'" Projets pour une résolution pacifique de la question d'Orient au tournant du xxe siècle', *Cahiers balkaniques* 44 (2016), pp. 1–21.

36 On this project, see M. Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2020).

to attribute any particular rights to Jews. In reaction to this stance emerged an autonomous socialist political movement demanding specific rights for Jews – the Bund, founded in Vilnius (then Vilna) in 1897. Becoming part of the RSDRP, it fought for recognition of Jews' cultural and national rights within the Russian Empire.

The migration question was particularly sharply posed at the start of the twentieth century, not least thanks to the initiative taken by Argentine socialists.³⁷ Certainly, there was a notable distinction here, between the 'sender' countries and those that 'received' migrants, although there were also divergences within the International's various sections. The United States was a case in point. The Amsterdam Congress of 1904 put on display a telling division within the US section, which could not reach an agreement on this question. Morris Hillquit, a Russian Jewish immigrant and member of the Socialist Party, backed by the Dutchman Henri van Kol (an engineer in the Netherlands' colonial administration in Java), emphasized the role of immigration in depressing wages, and demanded legislation to restrict the use of foreign labour. Other members of the US section, however, opposed the discrimination against 'coolies' (Asian workers). Thus, there were no grounds for consensus. Hillquit would later go so far as to justify a division among different types of immigrants; thus, in 1907, he stated that, 'While we have absolutely no racial prejudices against the Chinese we must frankly tell you that they cannot be organized. Only a people well advanced in its historical development, such as the Belgians and Italians in France, can be organized for the class struggle.'³⁸ Racism and protectionism were widespread in certain sections of the International in this era. The Australian socialist party went yet further, calling on the Stuttgart Congress of 1907 to defend a 'White Australia' against the 'yellow invasion'. The congress denounced such positions, but without settling the problem: racism was theoretically condemned, but many parties were imbued with xenophobic nationalism.

Beyond questions concerning nationalities and minorities, there were also major tensions between the International's parties with regard to international hostilities, and the risk of rivalries leading to war. Thus, the French–German duo was sorely tested by the rise of nationalism in these two countries, with a revanchist spirit burning in much of the French population after the war of 1870. Even apart from France and Germany,

37 C. Weill, *L'Internationale et l'autre. Les relations interethniques dans la 11e Internationale* (Paris: Arcantères, 1995), pp. 97–122.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

peace was one of the International's great focuses. The vocabulary of 'pacifism' did not originally belong to the socialists' outlook: 'pacifism' was 'bourgeois', and socialists much more readily adopted an 'anti-militarist' stance. This meant setting the fight against war within a wider struggle against the capitalist system. In this lay the real theoretical difference between 'bourgeois' pacifism and the socialists' anti-war activity.

At the Second International's first congress in 1889, just one agenda item addressed questions related to maintaining peace. But the peace question assumed greater importance around the turn of the century, with the rising risk of war between France and Germany, then the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. At the International's congresses in Stuttgart (1907), Copenhagen (1910), and Basel (1912) this question was ever-present. The socialists of this era envisaged various different means of preventing or putting a stop to war, and these were the object of intense debates. At the 1910 Copenhagen Congress, Edouard Vaillant and Keir Hardie of Britain's Labour Party proposed a resolution which called for a general strike in the case of war. The debate was postponed – and indeed never really took place, because the First World War had broken out in the meantime.³⁹

The Italian case is interesting in this regard, for the problem of war had already been concretely posed there – prompting different reactions within that country's Socialist Party (PSI).⁴⁰ This question was heavily debated in Italy in 1911, at the start of the Italian–Turkish War (1911–12). In this period, the PSI supported Giovanni Giolitti's government, but when the latter decided to fight against Turkey for control of Tripolitania, the left wing of the PSI called for it to withdraw its backing for Giolitti at the party's Modena Congress (1911). The reformists insisted on the opposite approach: socialists had to fight for peace but, if war came, they had to support their own country.

The peace question was largely posed at a European level. But if the bulk of the International's sections were located on this continent, its Eurocentrism ought to be seen in relative terms: indeed, the socialist parties could hardly remain indifferent to the global expansion of colonization. They were marked by deep differences on this point: between colonizing and colonized countries, of course, but there were also different readings within each of the International's sections.

39 G. Haupt, *Le congrès manqué. L'Internationale à la veille de la première guerre mondiale* (Paris: François Maspero, 1965).

40 Marcobelli, *Internationalism toward Diplomatic Crisis*.

In France, there was a clear condemnation of colonial expeditions at the French Workers' Party's 1895 Romilly Congress. Then, in 1898, a Guadeloupean MP was elected – Hégésippe Légitimus, a figure sympathetic to criticisms of the colonial order. As for the wider International, its Paris Congress in 1900 adopted a specific resolution on colonialism for the first time, issuing a formal condemnation. But a few leaders later, at the Amsterdam Congress in 1904, Henri van Kol insisted that colonial crimes could be tempered by the application of a 'socialist colonial policy'.⁴¹ The left wing of the International around Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, however, expressed strong hostility to colonialism, and passed a motion in this spirit at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907.

A turning point in this regard was marked in 1905. A series of revolutions began in the 'Orient' with the Russian Revolution followed by Iran's 1906 constitutional revolution, the Young Turk revolution in Istanbul in 1908, and then the proclamation of the first Chinese Republic in 1911.⁴² These events coincided with the international socialist movement's 'discovery of imperialism'.⁴³ The traditional denunciation of capitalism was increasingly accompanied by condemnation of 'colonialism' and 'imperialism'. Here, the term 'imperialism' referred to the Great Powers' expansionist economic policies and underlined the central role that colonial domination played therein. Max Beer, an Austrian émigré in London, and French socialist Paul Louis were first to popularize the term 'imperialism' at the start of the twentieth century. Imperialism became a more precise analytical framework and designated a new phase in capitalism's history, in which inter-imperial rivalry stood at the heart of the political dynamic. Without doubt, solidarity with colonial peoples was not at the heart of these works. But they did provide the most internationalist currents with tools with which to denounce the connection between colonialism and capitalism.

In this context, while upon the International's foundation in 1889 Asia had been almost ignored, from the turn of the century this continent occupied an increasingly important role within the world of socialism. In Japan, the Asian country where industrialization was most advanced, Katayama Sen founded

41 F. Tichelman, 'Socialist "Internationalism" and the Colonial World: Practical Colonial Policies of Social Democracy in Western Europe before 1940 with Particular Reference to the Dutch SDAP', in F. L. van Holthoorn and M. van der Linden (eds.), *Internationalism and the Labour Movement, 1830–1940* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 87–108.

42 M. Rebérioux and G. Haupt, *La Deuxième Internationale et l'Orient* (Paris: Cujas, 1967).

43 R. B. Day and D. Gaido (eds.), *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

the first Japanese Socialist Party in 1901. That same year, the socialist Kōtoku Shūsui published *Imperialism, Monster of the Twentieth Century*.⁴⁴ This text is an important indicator of the thinking that was now taking place: Japanese imperialism was condemned alongside that of the colonial powers, though the link with capitalism was not clearly established. Japan's central role was also apparent in the manner of the circulation of socialist ideas in Asia: indeed, in 1904, the first Chinese-language translation of *Capital* was published in Tokyo. Both the French and the German socialist press celebrated a small step forward: Marx had finally reached Asia. That same year, the International opened up to the world at its Amsterdam Congress: in a symbolic move, the chairmanship of this congress, which was held at the height of the Russian–Japanese War, was entrusted to both Georgi Plekhanov and Katayama Sen. In parallel to this, there was also considerable attention towards socialism's first steps in China, as well as the proclamation of the Chinese Republic in 1911. A long unpublished report on China by E. Harding – a text recently unearthed from the Georges Haupt archives in Paris – well illustrates the International Socialist Bureau's keen interest in Asia.⁴⁵

Parallel to Asia's emerging role, the 'Orient' took on increasing importance within the international socialist movement. Two 'Oriental' cases – Iran and Finland – well illustrate the cross-border connections that developed between socialist militants operating within imperial contexts. For instance, links between militants in the Russian and Persian empires developed across the Iranian border.⁴⁶ The genesis of the first social democratic group in Iran, the *Firqah-ye Ejtama'iyun-e 'Amiyun-e Iran – Mojahed* (FEAM), and the important role it played can hardly be dissociated from the development of Russian social democracy. Indeed, in this period there were numerous intellectual and economic connections between Iran and the Russian-controlled Caucasus. The development of Iran's social democratic movement was thus linked to the mass migration of poor Iranian workers to the Caucasus during the latter half of the nineteenth century (not least to centres of rapid industrialization like the Baku oil belt). These connections were all the more remarkable given that they were more intense than others that existed *within*

44 K. Shāshui, *L'impérialisme, le spectre du xxe siècle* (Paris: CNRS Editions 2008).

45 Report available at <https://archivesfmsh.hypotheses.org/1944>, translated and published in Chinese in Shanghai (*World Socialist Studies Yearbook*, CASS Shanghai, 2016).

46 R. Taghian, *Grenzgänger des Sozialismus. Die transnationale Dimension der frühen sozialistischen Bewegung im Iran (1905–1911)* (Leipzig: Promedia, 2014); T. Atabaki, 'Disgruntled guests: Iranian subaltern on the margins of the tsarist empire', *International Review of Social History* 48 (2003), pp. 401–26.

the Russian Empire. In the Grand Duchy of Finland, an integral part of Russia (and geographically very close to the capital, St Petersburg), there were links between the Finnish Social Democratic Party (SDP, *Sosiaalidemokraattinen Puolue*) founded in 1903 and Russian social democracy. But a close study shows that the Finnish party's more important sources of political-ideological inspiration lay in German social democracy or neighbouring Nordic countries.⁴⁷ Here, the rejection of tsarism and the assertion of a strong Finnish nationalism prevented closer ties with the Russians. Imperial and cross-border situations could thus vary widely; this further highlights the richness of the International's life even in peripheral regions outside its west European core.

Conclusion: 1914, a Rupture?

The Second International's history did not come to an end in 1914. Unlike the IWMA or the Comintern, this organization exists to this day, though obviously in a very different form. Even now, it continues to bring together social democratic parties from across the world.

But certainly, it does make sense to take the start of the First World War as the date of a major rupture. A congress was supposed to be held in August 1914, but the outbreak of hostilities prevented it from ever taking place. The International had failed to realize universal peace under the banner of socialism. Most socialists rallied to the war effort: in France and Germany, their parliamentary groups voted unanimously for war credits. Only individual socialists, or relatively marginal parties (especially in eastern Europe), opposed the war. The congresses' internationalist appeals now seemed a distant memory. Marxist historiography, influenced by the success of Bolshevik ideas, has long taken the social democrats' attitude in 1914 as a 'betrayal'. But research over the last three decades has rather more tended to underline the various parties' national rootedness and patriotic attitude, which had developed long before summer 1914.⁴⁸ Even so, after several months in which they remained in a state of shock, internationalist minorities did then seek to build an opposition to the war; these oppositions gradually

47 M. Carrez, 'Des transferts culturels complexes. La social-démocratie finlandaise d'avant 1914 au filtre d'une analyse transnationale', *Cahiers Jaurès* 3 (2020), pp. 47–69; H. Soikkanen, *Sosialismin tulo Suomeen ensimmäisiin yksikamarisen eduskunnan vaaleihin asti* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1961).

48 K. Callahan, 'A decade of research on the Second International: new insights and methods', *Moving the Social* 63 (2020), pp. 185–99.

grew in strength, showing the enduring strength of ideals that had been formulated and defended ever since the 1880s.

A major object of research from the 1960s to the 1980s, in the 1990s the Second International's history had to make way for a greater focus on the history of communism, not least given the archives that were now opened. But over the last decade, the Second International has attracted fresh interest and research, stimulated by labour history as well as entangled and trans-national history. Even beyond its own history, it is also worth noting the importance of representations of the Second International within socialist, communist, and far-left movements over the course of the twentieth century. Each of them considered 1889–1914 as a starting point. This period was a key juncture in the history of socialism, and thus continues to be a source of important inquiries.

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The Second International Reconstituted: The Labour and Socialist International, 1923–1940

REINER TOSSTORFF

When the Second International gathered for an Extraordinary Congress in Basel on 24–25 November 1912, right in the middle of the Balkan wars, the congress became a massive anti-war rally where the leading social democratic parties¹ once again underlined their commitment to struggling for peace under all circumstances. But, as is well known, in the early days of August 1914 they behaved differently and declared support for their respective fatherlands and therefore the war.

The Second International during the War: Collapse and the Emergence of an Anti-War Opposition

The parties' support for the war marked the beginning of the policy known in Germany as *Burgfrieden* ('castle truce') and in France as *Union sacrée*, which most parties immediately embraced. But soon, small circles of the party base were beginning to stir. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace the development of this anti-war opposition in the various countries, which in time brought about

¹ For reasons of space and for ease of understanding, I use the term 'social democratic' throughout, even if individual parties called themselves 'socialist' or simply 'labour'/'workers' parties'. The reason I do so is that, while some of the parties gave themselves different names, they had a common organizational and political frame of reference and there were no real qualitative political differences between them. As a general base, I have used the 'classical' multi-volume study of social democratic internationalism by Julius Braunthal, *History of the International* (London: Nelson, 1967), esp. vol. II, 1914–1943. Braunthal was not only its historian but also an active participant from the 1920s on. Gert Callesen's introduction to the bibliography of the publications of the social democratic International(s), which he compiled, also provides a concise but informative overview, which in addition leads the story into the recent past, and combines it with the primary sources: *Socialist Internationals: A Bibliography. Publications of the Social-Democratic and Socialist Internationals 1914–2000. A Project by the International Association of Labour History Institutions (IALHI)* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2001), pp. 7–16.

changes in the party leadership or even splits.² But a first international meeting was held in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, in September 1915, which brought together what were still mainly minority trends or exile groups.³

In spite of the common struggle against the war, the Zimmerwald movement was not without its political differences: should the struggle for peace or the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism be at the centre of its work? Linked to this was also the question of whether the opposition could reform and reconstruct the old parties and the International, or whether they had to be replaced by new revolutionary parties and a new International. Accordingly, was the International Socialist Commission formed in Zimmerwald merely to co-ordinate the opposition, or did it stand opposed to the Second International as the core of a new revolutionary International? The impact of the Russian Revolution also ensured that there would ultimately be a further division – this time among the anti-war opposition itself.

And the International? At first, its leadership, the International Socialist Bureau, did not take any further action following the outbreak of the war. Karl Kautsky, the leading interpreter of Marxism in the Second International, soon declared that the International could only be something for peacetime. Since it had not been able to prevent a war, it was effectively suspended. But after the emergence of the opposition in Zimmerwald, it reacted. A delegation was set up in the neutral Netherlands in order to seize back the initiative to defend the unity of the International and maintain its leadership claims.

After the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917, it was hoped that the differences between the principled enemies of the war and the supporters of

2 The history of the collapse of the Second International and the struggle for a revival of internationalism that emerged soon afterwards has been told many times – first, shortly after the war by individual protagonists, and subsequently by a number of historians. There are also several documentary editions. The following remarks are based on, besides Braunthal, *History of the International*, vol. 11, the more academic studies by G. Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), and on the most recent and exhaustive research work by H. Lademacher, *Die Illusion vom Frieden. Die Zweite Internationale wider den Krieg 1889–1919* (Münster: Waxmann, 2018) – all of which contain extensive bibliographies.

3 The history of the socialist anti-war movement from Zimmerwald on has been the topic of a series of investigations and is well documented in H. Lademacher (ed.), *Die Zimmerwalder Bewegung. Protokolle und Korrespondenz*, 2 vols. (Paris: Mouton, 1967). Particularly noteworthy is the account published a few years after the end of the First World War by Angelika Balabanoff. As its secretary, she was a central figure in the Zimmerwald movement and thus could combine documents with recollections: A. Balabanoff, *Die Zimmerwalder Bewegung 1914–1919* (Leipzig: Hirschfeld, 1928). Moreover, her memoirs, published since the 1920s in a number of editions and languages, add significant personal impressions.

Burgfrieden could be overcome. This could give international social democracy a say in future peace talks and in determining the post-war order. But the call for a meeting of all social democratic parties on neutral ground in Stockholm in the summer of 1917 proved to be unsuccessful. The differences proved to be unbridgeable.

After the War: Reconstruction Attempts and New Formations

Even though, after the end of the war, it had fallen to some of the social democratic parties to pick up the shards by forming governments and by quelling, or breaking up, the revolutionary wave that had engulfed the defeated countries, social democracy as an international current was largely absent from the process of shaping the new post-world war order negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference.⁴

It was only due to the efforts of the trade unions that some socio-political demands were included in the section of the peace treaties that laid out the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO).⁵

Nothing was more significant than the fact that an international gathering of social democratic parties could only be convened far from Paris, in Bern, from 3 to 10 February 1919. On the one hand, the planned League of Nations and the ILO were widely supported. Opposing views clashed on the question of dictatorship (of the proletariat in the form of the councils or 'soviets') or (parliamentary) democracy. A large majority sharply distanced themselves from the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, there was a ('centrist') minority that built upon those parts of the anti-war opposition that had previously pushed for a pacifist orientation and that had gained a majority in several parties. They did not want to slam the door on Moscow in principle. However, in March 1919 the Communist International was founded in Moscow.

A commission was set up to initiate the organizational steps to restore the International. Eventually, at the end of July 1920, a congress convened in Geneva, but this was in fact a mere torso, as it was boycotted by the 'centrist'

4 The history of the attempts to reconstruct the Second International is now clearly outlined in the extensively annotated collection of documents by G. A. Ritter (ed.), *Die 11. Internationale 1918/1919. Protokolle, Memoranden, Berichte und Korrespondenzen*, 2 vols. (Bonn: Dietz, 1980); R. Sigel, *Die Geschichte der Zweiten Internationale 1918–1923* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1986).

5 On this, see Reiner Tosstorff, 'The international trade union movement and the founding of the International Labour Organization', *International Review of Social History* 50, 3 (2005), pp. 399–433.

minority. An international structure with a secretariat in London was then created, which claimed to embody the continuity of the Second International.

However, the ‘centrist’ minority, which rejected the Communist International anyway, assembled in Vienna in February 1921 and founded the ‘International Working Union of Socialist Parties’. This was a kind of ‘in-between international’, and it quickly became known as the ‘Two-and-a-Half International’. Its founders still hoped that the division of the international labour movement could eventually be overcome in some way.⁶

Nevertheless, the next two years marked a period of complicated discussions and confrontations between ‘London’ and ‘Vienna’. For some time in 1922, even the Comintern participated within these skirmishes. In the end, however, especially under the impact of the deteriorating international situation which would ultimately lead to the occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923, a process of convergence between London and Vienna began. It had helped that there was also a common organizational framework in the form of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), which from 1919 was also known as the Amsterdam International due to the location of its headquarters. The communists fiercely attacked it.⁷ After meetings and separate deliberations between the London and Vienna internationals, a decision was finally reached to unite them.

The Founding Congress of the Labour and Socialist International

The founding congress of the Labour and Socialist International (LSI),⁸ as the new International was called, took place in Hamburg from 21 to 25 May 1923.⁹

6 Besides the remarks by Braunthal (who as an Austrian social democrat had himself been very committed), in *History of the International*, vol. 11, as well as some short articles, the main book-length study is A. Donneur, *Histoire de l'Union des Partis socialistes pour l'action internationale (1920–1923)* (Sudbury: Librairie de l'Université Laurentienne, 1967).

7 See G. Van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International: The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913–1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

8 In addition to the literature cited above, what follows draws on what is, despite some limitations, the most detailed history of the LSI: W. Kowalski (ed.), *Geschichte der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale (1923–1940)* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1985). Additionally, various aspects are elaborated in much more detail by the monothematic issue of *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, 23 (1983–4), ed. E. Collotti, titled *L'Internazionale Operaia e Socialista tra le due guerre*. On the British Labour Party, see Ch. Collette, *The International Faith: Labour's Attitudes to European Socialism 1918–1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 46–98.

9 Proceedings with the text of all speeches, activity reports, and additional material were published for all congresses in German, and some also in English. For detailed

Present were 426 ordinary and 194 guest delegates from a total of 43 parties. They claimed to represent more than 7 million members, even though several parties were only represented by exile groups. Quite a few of the parties present either already had experience in government or had recently joined governments. Before and after this congress, conferences of social democratic women and youth took place. Subsequently, such conferences of the 'subsidiary organizations' would accompany the congresses of the LSI.

But the LSI was essentially still an organization of the (male) European working class with 'white' offshoots overseas, without representation of the emerging 'indigenous' proletariat, just as the composition of the leadership was strongly determined by the pre-war generation. In this way, the congress seemed like a return to the position the International found itself in on the eve of the First World War. As revealed by the tenor of the debates, however, following the experience of the war, there was a break with the pre-1914 period when it came to the International's entire political orientation. The mutual accusations from the wartime period were now forgotten as far as possible. At any rate, the LSI could claim strong roots in the west European labour movement, despite the challenge from the Communist International. However, while the latter's parties often had a more activist core, the social democratic parties were clearly superior when it came to elections and often wielded governmental influence.

The congress debates were introduced by an assessment of the peace, which was characterized as an imperialist peace. In so doing, the speakers representing the former warring states undoubtedly reflected the mood among their broad membership, but they did not explain why they had been at war with each other. Now the emphasis was on securing peace, and the main task needed to achieve this was the settlement of the conflicts over reparations. These were to be adjusted to Germany's economic output and oriented towards the restoration of the areas that had been destroyed. This was accompanied by a protest against the occupation of the Ruhr.

While the revolutions of 1918 had raised many hopes, the international situation was now dominated by a reactionary offensive, which constituted the next item on the agenda. Following the Curzon ultimatum against the Soviet Union, the danger of war loomed for a few weeks. But above all, there had been a clear shift to the right with actual or veiled military dictatorships in several countries. In Italy, a completely new force had arisen: fascism. The

information, see *Socialist Internationals: A Bibliography*. For the Hamburg congress, see *ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

proposed means of defence remained rather vague, however; extra-parliamentary mass actions were to be more closely linked to initiatives in the parliaments and a mutual exchange of information between the parties was envisaged.

But the question of the International's attitude towards communism had also been included within this agenda item, with a representative of the Mensheviks speaking on it. He took a strong stance, which provoked objections from the plenary. A commission eventually defused his draft resolution. What was decisive, however, was the drawing of a clear, sharp line of demarcation against communism, which became a basic principle of the LSI. On the other hand, the next item on the agenda, concerning the eight-hour day and the continuation of social reform, did not cause any real controversy. Here, the International mainly placed its faith in continued work in the ILO and the parliamentary activities of the member parties.

The congress concluded by determining the organizational structures in a new statute. In order to avoid another disaster like that of August 1914, fundamental principles were laid down right at the beginning and a wording was adopted on the primacy of the International, which was declared to be important in wartime too. The Vienna International, which had made a proposal to this effect, had attached great importance to this statute. Whether it could be implemented in practice, however, remained to be seen. A congress was to take place every three years. The LSI was to be led by an executive composed according to the strength of the member parties and would normally meet every three months. In between these meetings, the leadership would fall to a bureau of nine members that would meet frequently. The executive elected a British Labour Party representative as chairman and appointed two secretaries, one from each of the two sources of origin: another Labour Party member and the Austrian Friedrich Adler, who had already been the driving force behind the Vienna International.¹⁰

In organizational terms, the Labour Party was now the main pillar of the International, not least because of the financial strength of the pound. On a theoretical-programmatic level, however, most of the impetus came from representatives of the former Vienna International, such as Otto Bauer or Friedrich Adler. It remained to be seen, however, whether the LSI was not essentially a federation of national parties that determined their policies on the basis of their respective national situation.

¹⁰ For the central role of Adler during the LSI's history as long as he held office, see E. Collotti, 'Appunti su Friedrich Adler segretario della Internazionale Operaia Socialista', *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli* 23 (1983/4), pp. 65–103.

At least the quest for unity, which was expressed through the merger, had been realized successfully. Only a small minority of mainly splinter groups from the Vienna International had directly escaped this unity. They formed a Paris-based office of revolutionary socialist parties. Also, following a series of new splits after 1931, this led to the 'London Bureau' of left-wing socialism.¹¹ Some mass social democratic parties, however, continued to bide their time slightly, but then joined in subsequent years. These included the Argentine and Swiss parties, the Jewish Labour Bund in Poland, and much later the Norwegian Labour Party, long after its flirtation with communism. The IFTU's presence as a guest at the congress was also a continuation of its close co-operation with the predecessor Internationals, and this co-operation now became even closer. In the following years, this turned out to be useful for keeping the temporary left tendency in the international trade union movement around Edo Fimmen, secretary of the International Transport Workers Federation, and the General Council of the British TUC, under control.¹²

The LSI during the Deceptive Boom of the Mid-1920s

Developments initially seemed to justify the prevailing optimism at the Hamburg Congress, although setbacks did occur: Italian fascism consolidated itself and coups established dictatorships on the periphery of Europe, such as in Spain (by Primo de Rivera) and Bulgaria (by Tsankov). In Germany, on the other hand, the Weimar Republic finally consolidated itself after the Ruhr crisis came to an end. A *coup d'état* was averted, but so was a 'German October'. However, the social democrats, who were also able to maintain the unity of their party by taming the left wing, lost their place in government. In return, the Labour Party was able to enter the British government for the first time – albeit one tolerated by the Liberals and only for just under a year at that. In France, a Socialist-backed government of the (left-liberal)

11 On left socialism at the margins of the LSI (as well as communism) during the interwar years, see Willy Buschak, Chapter 23, this volume; also W. Buschak, *Das Londoner Büro. Europäische Linksozialisten in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1985); on the Paris Bureau, see pp. 321f.

12 On the role played by Edo Fimmen, who favoured unity efforts with the communists and who also influenced the LSI's left wing, see W. Buschak, *Edo Fimmen. Der schöne Traum von Europa und die Globalisierung. Eine Biografie* (Essen: Klartext, 2002). See also B. Reinalda (ed.), *The International Transportworkers Federation 1914–1945: The Edo Fimmen Era* (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1997).

Radicals was formed. Further electoral successes, albeit not as clear-cut as these, followed in other countries. But there was soon criticism of the parties' activity in government on account of the comparatively modest results achieved (due to numerous constraints). In many social democratic parties, a discussion now began about the principles and tactics of participation in government, which the leader of the French socialists, Léon Blum, tried to grasp theoretically with the formula of the tension between the 'exercise of power' and the 'conquest of power'. This now had to become a topic of discussion for the International.

When it came to international politics following the resolution of the Ruhr crisis, the LSI advocated the establishment of an international arbitration system based on the League of Nations. Although this was set in motion at the end of 1924 with the 'Geneva Protocol', it failed to be ratified. Efforts to establish a multilateral and comprehensive peacekeeping system were limited to the Locarno treaties – not least because of the antagonisms between the various social democratic parties.¹³ These failures did at least have the effect of paving the way for Germany's entry into the League of Nations.

In the economic sphere, the Dawes Plan seemed to have brought the reparations issue to a practical level and also stimulated international trade. It was therefore largely welcomed by international social democracy. However, sharp criticism could also be heard from the left wing of the individual parties, because stabilization was not suited to ease the burden of the consequences of the war on the working class and ultimately depended on the constant inflow of American loans.

Thus, if we overlook the contradictions within it, the LSI seemed to be on a successful course at its second congress (22–27 August 1925 in Marseilles).¹⁴ The peace question was the dominant topic. The course of moving towards the Locarno treaties was approved in principle, but there was some criticism of any excessive expectations, as capitalism would necessarily produce crises. It was claimed that the most important thing was how the treaties would be concretely formulated in the event of possible government participation.

¹³ This has recently been a central topic of the very well-documented study by M. Bauer, *Die transnationale Zusammenarbeit in der Zwischenkriegszeit. Eine Analyse der außenpolitischen Kooperations- und Vernetzungsprozesse am Beispiel von SPD, SFIO und Labour Party* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2018). It shows that decision-making on international policy questions often resulted from discussions among the important parties that circumvented the International.

¹⁴ On the proceedings and other material from the congress, see *Socialist Internationals*, pp. 26–7.

However, this overly optimistic picture was somewhat undermined by the war conducted by the colonial powers Spain and France in Morocco against the Berber uprising under Abdelkrim. This showed that the question of peace could not just be confined to a contractual system in Europe. In any case, solidarity with the insurgents was rejected. The LSI offered only vague solutions, which were somehow to be mediated through the League of Nations. This also raised the question of the general attitude to the colonial question, but this was postponed to the next congress.

The line of political demarcation drawn against the left was emphasized once more. Any co-operation with the communists (e.g., in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee) was strongly rejected. Ultimately, it was expected that in the long run the Soviet dictatorship would be unstable and have to collapse. But the voices of those such as Kautsky or the exiled Georgian social democrats that called for an uprising were rejected. The Soviet Union's mere collapse would lead to an unexpected destabilization of the international situation.

But as an international of workers' parties, the LSI's objective was above all to advance social reform. To this end, securing the 8-hour day in accordance with the founding conference of the ILO in Washington in 1919 remained its central demand. In many countries, there had been setbacks since then. The ratification of the Washington Convention was declared to be the central demand for the work of social democratic members of parliament. It was the centrepiece of social democratic social reform and would certainly be supplemented by a series of measures to combat unemployment.

When it came to the state of the organization, Friedrich Adler as the now sole secretary of the International was able to report that the International had consolidated itself and to announce the next congress in three years' time. However, ideas to promote the expansion of the International by creating non-European structures could not be dealt with. The International remained a European undertaking with some offshoots: mainly among European migrants in some overseas countries. Although the congress had not discussed previous government experience as a specific issue that would require theoretical clarification, the necessity of governing was underlined during the discussion on each and every agenda item. The situation was therefore different from that before 1914, which merely involved establishing principles. 'Positive co-operation' was now the central task.

In the following years, the LSI developed along these lines. However, the balance remained mixed. A real political breakthrough did not materialize anywhere. Individual parliamentary successes were limited. In Great Britain,

the defeat of the general strike in May 1926 even triggered a sharp shift to the right. But the general stabilization also brought heightened contradictions. Keeping a distance from collaboration with the communists in several of their initiatives was ratcheted up. This hit the British Independent Labour Party (ILP) first. (Although it was collectively affiliated to the Labour Party, at the same time it also independently belonged to the LSI.) This was also enforced in other parties.

But overall, the LSI reached a new high point when its congress met in Brussels from 5 to 11 August 1928.¹⁵ Although it remained concentrated in western and central Europe, the LSI registered forty-five member parties with 6.6 million members and an electoral base of 25.2 million. Four central topics stood out from the agenda: the international situation, militarism and disarmament, the colonial question, and the economic situation and its consequences for the labour movement.

Apart from a few individual critical voices, this congress largely followed the line taken by its two predecessors. It stressed the ‘equilibrium of class forces’ on which bourgeois democracy rested. This idea was based on the theoreticians of Austrian social democracy – Otto Bauer in particular. They had outlined it in their party programme of 1927. In this context, there was also a discussion dedicated to an assessment of fascism – at that point still largely an Italian phenomenon. It was viewed as ultimately incompatible with the nature of developed capitalism and thus it was not afforded any significant potential in the future.

In addition, the economy was seen as having developed towards ‘organized capitalism’, which had already created elements of socialism by resorting to methods of planning. There were controversial views on the extent to which the path to socialism would still need to be taken from here. However, the ‘military question’, the relationship of social democracy to rearmament and army organization, proved to be controversial. Even though the principle of national defence was accepted, there were also pacifist voices against it. This question became practical in Germany exactly at the time of the congress, as the SPD (in the face of fierce internal opposition) agreed to rearmament by building new warships as part of re-entering government following the elections of May 1928.

At last, a resolution on the colonial question had arrived. In principle, the LSI accepted that it was born out of capitalist motives. It condemned what it

15 On the proceedings and other material from the congress, see *ibid.*, pp. 27–30.

called 'excesses' and what had led to various uprisings in the years before. A distinction was drawn between different 'cultural levels', which explained different types of colonial relations. Reference was also made to the mandate system of the League of Nations. In principle, however, colonial dependency would open up a path of development.

The assessment of the economic situation was essentially positive. However, the ratification of the Washington Eight-Hours Convention remained unresolved. Election victories already achieved, or in the offing, seemed to offer a positive solution. In May 1929, the Labour Party was able to celebrate (relative) electoral success and took over government again. This seemed to be another element in a long chain of social democratic governmental activity. But in October 1929 the Great Depression began and conditions for social democratic reformism fundamentally changed.

The LSI Faced with the World Economic Crisis

At first it seemed to be just an economic downturn, soon leading to an upswing. The optimistic expectations at the 1928 congress had, admittedly, also provoked some scepticism. But in the first months after the stock market crash in New York, a real collapse still seemed avoidable. After all, as early as January 1930, a first initiative to combat unemployment through a plan of state measures came in the form of a memorandum by the then Labour minister Oswald Mosley. But it was rejected, Mosley resigned, and he set out on a fast track to fascism. Accordingly, these policies' emphasis on 'corporatism' soon became politically questionable. Moreover, by and large, the influx of new members and voters continued in Europe. But this changed in the course of 1930, when the unstoppable severity of the crisis with its mass unemployment became apparent. Aside from in the United States, where, however, the Socialist Party had little influence, this was particularly true in central Europe, starting in Germany. With a time lag, the crisis spread to almost all countries, especially from 1931 onwards. Already by the end of March 1930, the SPD had lost its place in the German government. In the September 1930 elections, the Nazi movement rose comet-like. The Weimar Republic entered its death agony. The SPD was now helplessly wedged between a government making massive social cuts and a threatened Nazi takeover: it chose the 'lesser of two evils'.

There was a massive attack on the working-class's social situation that culminated in a process of impoverishment. Could the LSI offer an alternative?

A number of commissions were set up and joint consultations were held with the IFTU. The crisis programme that emerged from this process was comparatively meagre: the focus was on reducing working hours to a forty-hour week, which was to be accompanied by other social improvements, such as extending compulsory schooling to get young people off the streets and expanding the leisure sector. International trade was to be promoted through tariff reductions, and public job-creation programmes were proposed. But the question of whether these could be financed by credit remained controversial, since, in reference to Marxist economic theory, some leaders conjured up the danger of high inflation. It took some time to overcome these concerns. But first the LSI had to experience, in addition to the defeat in Germany, how its second-most important party, the Labour Party in Great Britain, was removed from government in August 1931 as a result of a split that occurred due to the fact that social cuts were rejected by the party, but supported by important party leaders and ministers.

The international system was now also beginning to totter. Nationalist propaganda against 'Versailles' became more and more acute in Germany. The Young Plan of May 1930 seemed to offer a definitive solution to the reparations problem and provided the Nazis with an enormous propaganda opportunity, but within a year the economic crisis had rendered the plan's implementation impossible. More and more states demanded the revision of 'Versailles', while the disarmament talks conducted by the League of Nations reached an impasse. Japan's open war of conquest against China in east Asia had been under way since September 1931. While in 1928 fascism had still been described as a pre-industrial movement, it had now turned into a force of latent civil war against the entire labour movement in the most industrialized countries. At the same time, however, the confrontation between social democracy and communism had intensified since the latter's turn in 1928/9 towards the policy of 'social fascism' and the splitting of the trade unions. Demands for a 'united front' against fascism were thus bound to come to nothing.

These were the conditions under which the LSI Congress met from 25 July to 1 August 1931 in 'Red Vienna', the model of social democratic reform politics in the 1920s (Figure 13.1).¹⁶ The figures were still impressive: 740 delegates from 38 parties with 6 million members and over 26 million voters. That was almost the same as in 1928. In the face of political setbacks and the crisis, the LSI still seemed to be unbeatable.

16 On the proceedings and other material from the congress, see *ibid.*, pp. 31–4.

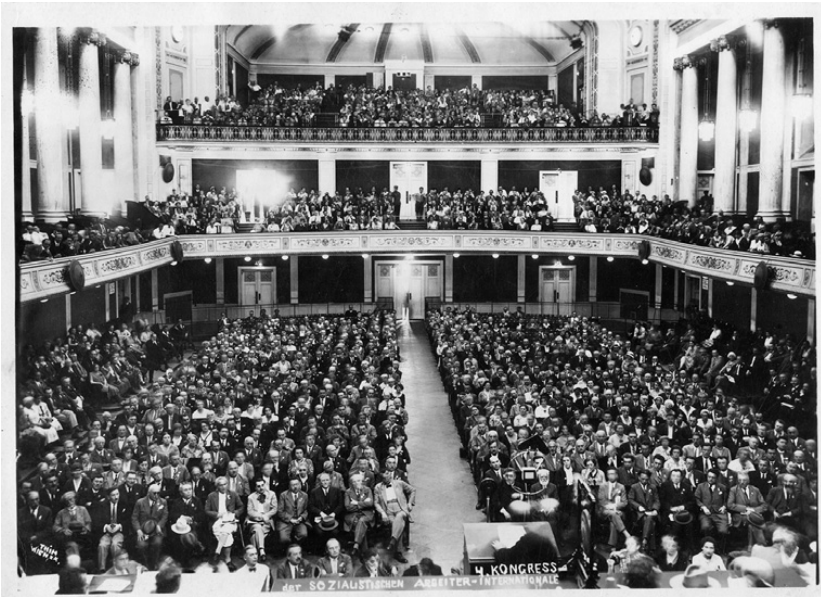


Fig. 13.1 Ceremonial opening session of the Vienna LSI Congress in the Großer Konzerthausaal, 1931. (Photograph by Franz Thim/International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)

The programmatic issues that had been hitherto advocated, from disarmament to the fight against the economic crisis, were essentially confirmed, or at best systematized. The LSI did not omit to add that this was a crisis of capitalism that could be finally solved only by socialism, that is, by the abolition of capitalist private property. Where controversy arose, however, was the attempt to call into question the SPD's attitude towards the Brüning Government – its 'toleration policy' – despite the fact that the LSI leadership had initially wanted to avoid this discussion. The impetus for the discussion came above all from the ILP, which acted as the spokesman for the left wing at the congress when the Labour government's crisis was already unavoidable. It found support in the Jewish Labour Bund from Poland, which had finally joined the LSI the year before, after a long membership of the 'Paris Bureau', the remnant of the Vienna International. This step had been taken not least to promote close co-operation with the Polish Socialist Party, but also to counterbalance the support that 'labour Zionism' (Poale Zion) had received from some leaders of the LSI and which clearly stood, in politico-ideological terms, on the very

right wing of the LSI as a result of its abandonment of Marxism and a class-based politics.¹⁷ But the SPD was able to rely on the defence offered by Otto Bauer in particular. Moreover, it was said that the party should not be stabbed in the back in its difficult position in the defensive struggle sandwiched between the KPD and the Nazis.

Thus, this congress seemed to confirm once again the self-portrayal of the LSI as an impregnable fortress. It was a classic ‘military parade of the proletariat’ accompanied by a wide range of cultural and sporting events for which there had been international mobilization. But in the following months, the economic crisis and the advance of the radical right became ever more acute everywhere. Only a few counter-movements could be found, for example, in Spain following the proclamation of the republic in April 1931. Tensions increased in several parties. The ILP resigned from the Labour Party, and in the SPD the left wing, which rebelled against the toleration policy, was expelled. The left wing of Dutch social democracy split off. Together with other small intermediary groups between social democracy and communism and the remnants of the Paris Bureau, what was then called the ‘London Bureau’ of international left-wing socialism emerged in 1932, which from 1933 onwards increasingly tried to assert itself as an independent force against both the LSI and the Comintern.¹⁸

Only a few oppositional trends were noticeable. Although the effects of the global economic crisis were felt in Scandinavia too, social democratic electoral successes were achieved there and the first steps were taken to develop a different policy, which was state-centred and intended to be an alternative to mere austerity.¹⁹ True, radical right-wing movements did not disappear, but they were contained. In Germany, the trade unions had presented a job-creation plan (‘WTB Plan’) at the beginning of 1932.²⁰ However, this plan still met with a great deal of opposition from the SPD because of the suspected danger of inflation. Such ideas soon began to have an impact on other social

17 See Jack Jacobs, Chapter 6, this volume; also G. Pickhan, ‘Gegen den Strom’. *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund ‘Bund’ in Polen 1918–1939* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2001), esp. pp. 388–408; M. Kessler, ‘The Bund at the Labour and Socialist International’, in J. Jacobs (ed.), *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 183–94.

18 See above, fn. 11.

19 See the chapter on the origins of the Swedish model in M. Telò, *Le New Deal Européen. La pensée et la politique sociales-démocrates face à la crise des années trente* (Brussels: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1988), pp. 143–92.

20 The name of this plan went back to the names of its three authors: Wladimir Woytinsky, Fritz Tarnow, and Fritz Baade. See M. Schneider, *Das Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm des ADGB. Zur gewerkschaftlichen Politik in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Neue Gesellschaft, 1975).

democratic parties. But before they could develop fully, the political framework was essentially reversed by the Nazi power grab on 30 January 1933.

The LSI in the Political Crisis of the 1930s

The immediate reactions of the social democratic parties with which the leadership of the LSI was confronted extended across the entire political spectrum: they ranged from the demand for unity of action with the communists and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism to the traditional hope for the efforts of a democratic state. In fact, after a series of hectic consultations and correspondence, these first months also saw the first exchanges of proposals for discussions between the LSI and the Comintern, which once again ended without any results. Things only began to turn in 1934.

From 21 to 25 August 1933, a conference of the LSI met in Paris.²¹ It was more representative than the deliberations of the executive and the Bureau in the months before. However, it was not such a broad-based congress as in the earlier years and concentrated only on the one political question: what conclusions should be drawn from the German defeat? In any case, the outlawing of the SPD, its strongest section, represented a severe organizational blow. Thirty-two parties were represented by 128 delegates. It was to be the last major meeting of the LSI before its end at the outbreak of the Second World War, because a congress that needed to be held every three years, in line with the LSI's statutes, could no longer take place.

Remarkable, though ultimately unsurprising in view of the severity of the events in Germany, was that, in contrast to the 1931 congress with its rather isolated critical voices, something like a left-wing minority current articulated itself.²² After all, the German party had suffered a profound defeat and a simple 'keep it up' was not conceivable. But it quickly became clear that

21 This time, there were no official book editions of the proceedings in the main languages, merely a mimeographed version in German – a clear sign of the organizational regression caused by the defeat. For the documents from this conference, see *Socialist Internationals*, p. 35.

22 This was the tenor of the report that the Bund's leader Henryk Erlich published about the conference. See H. Ehrlich, *The Struggle for Revolutionary Socialism* (New York: Bund Club, 1934). Again, they presented themselves as the driving force for building up an opposition against reformism, very much in the continuation of the Vienna International, but explicitly rejected the foundation of an organizational alternative as represented by the forces of the London Bureau. But such a procedure would be dependent on the possibility of intervening in congresses which, however, would never take place again before the end of the LSI with the outbreak of the Second World War.

opinions diverged over the causes. Had the trust in bourgeois democracy been too great after all? But even though the majority defended the traditional approach, representatives especially from the camp of the old Vienna International now admitted that, when it came to the new right-wing dictatorships, only their revolutionary overthrow was conceivable. Some even spoke out in favour of taking up the formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat against fascism. But the question of co-operation with the communists remained heavily disputed. Here the attitude was much more resolute than the verbal criticism of the previous course's failure might have suggested. And it was no coincidence that at this point a counter-bloc of parties against the emerging left wing began to form, which opposed any move away from government participation in those democratic states that had remained comparatively stable despite the crisis.

Thus, the search for a new policy remained vague and ambiguous in order not to alienate any of the parties. This was also true of the more specific discussions on disarmament – where there was still essentially trust in the League of Nations – and economic policy. Here, however, the emphasis was now on active engagement, centred around job-creation measures and state intervention in the economic process – especially when it came to the regulation of credit. A number of parties and (social democratic) trade unions, led by the Belgians and especially Hendrik de Man, systematized this in the proposal for the 'Plan of Labour'. At the same time, however, they hesitated to initiate an anti-capitalist mass movement or even to pose the question of overthrowing the state.²³ All of this was affected by developments in the United States, even if the 'New Deal' came without any claims to socialism. But soon, in the face of growing internal contradictions over central political issues, the LSI handed over the whole complex of the economy, on which it had repeatedly consulted with the IFTU, to it entirely. After a high point, 'plan-ism' disappeared from the agenda of the social democratic parties in the second half of the 1930s.

However, 1934 brought a completely new turn of events: in France, after the mass rally of right-wing leagues in Paris on 6 February, the first joint mass demonstration of communists and socialists took place, which triggered a completely new dynamic in the anti-fascist defence and eventually led to the Popular Front two years later. On 12 February, the *Schutzbund*, the workers' militia of Austrian social democracy, resisted in an armed struggle against the

23 On De Man and 'plan-ism' within European social democracy, see G.-R. Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 74–95; T. Milani, *Hendrik de Man and Social Democracy: The Idea of Planning in Western Europe, 1914–1940* (Cham: Palgrave, 2020).

intensification of the dictatorship of 'Austrofascism', but had to admit defeat to the stronger opponent. In October 1934, there was also a bloodily suppressed uprising attempt in Asturias against a right-wing government.

All these events resulted in widespread international solidarity campaigns and led to the radicalization of many social democratic parties.²⁴ Their traditional parliamentary tactics were now called into question almost everywhere, although often only by minorities within the parties. This was particularly true of the youth organizations and their Socialist Youth International. More than ever before, the LSI now lost its claim to the international leadership that it declared it would provide at its foundation. In fact, the respective self-interests of the member parties became increasingly decisive.

So it was that, despite pronounced opposition from many parties, the French socialists were able to forge their electoral alliance with the communists and left-wing bourgeois radicals in the Popular Front without the International intervening. But this was not presented as an example for other parties to follow either. As a result, the meetings of the bureau or the executive were increasingly characterized by the confrontation of different and opposing positions, which, as a result, blocked each other.

This was particularly noticeable in the face of growing international tensions. Here, positions of principle were presented which drew on the experience of the First World War. An important contribution to the discussion came from Otto Bauer, Theodor Dan, and Jean Zyromski in 'Theses on War', which raised the necessity of overthrowing capitalism in the event of the outbreak of war.²⁵ But this was meant above all as a threat to those in power, to deter them from beginning a war. No policy guidelines were derived from this, because there was fierce resistance to it in the LSI. The other side, led by the Labour Party, referred to the League of Nations and the struggle for peace through collective security. But several parties from the smaller countries were now trying to keep their respective states out of a confrontation between the Great Powers and stressed their neutrality. Once again, the general principle of national defence was foregrounded.

24 For a comparative analysis and a dissection of the different fields, see Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, *passim*.

25 The theses have been republished by B. Lewis, 'Otto Bauer, Theodor Dan, Jean Zyromski, the International and the war, with a Foreword by Friedrich Adler and a Statement by Henry Noel Brailsford (1935)', *Critique. Journal of Socialist Theory* 44 (2016), pp. 291–305. For background to the theses and the discussion around them among the LSI leaders, see the edited correspondence between two of the authors of the theses, H. R. Peter (ed.), *Fedor I. Dan and Otto Bauer. Briefwechsel 1934–1938* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1999).

Bloc formations between parties emerged that reflected each country's particular international position and paralysed decision-making. This was especially evident in the case of the Spanish Civil War, where the LSI accepted the non-intervention policy of France and Great Britain out of consideration for their two member parties there. This was done without regard for the fact that it also pushed aside the League of Nations – not to mention that it abandoned solidarity with the Spanish socialists. LSI aid was thus limited to humanitarian operations and some gestures of solidarity. Only the Belgian socialist Emile Vandervelde, a veteran of international social democracy and LSI president from 1929 to 1935, drew the consequences and resigned from his ministerial post.²⁶

Although informal meetings with representatives of the Communist International took place for the first time since 1922 in connection with Spain, and although communists and social democrats now met in bodies of the IFTU following the liquidation of the Profintern, the trade union arm of the Comintern, tensions between the communists and the social democrats increased. This was a consequence of the Stalinist terror, as expressed in the Moscow show trials that were echoed in Spain, particularly in the persecution of the independent communist and anti-Stalinist POUM (disingenuously attacked as 'Trotskyist'). But diplomatic considerations also continued to be made in view of the possibility that the USSR could become an important ally in the event of war.²⁷ As a result, statements from the international leadership bodies remained contradictory, while in most countries the confrontation between communists and social democrats intensified.

In 1937, another attempt was made to convene a congress, but this quickly failed in the face of internal disagreements. In such a situation the International's secretary, Friedrich Adler, who had ensured the continuity

26 For a general overview, see N. Lépine, *Guerre d'Espagne et socialisme international. Dernière chance pour l'ordre démocratique d'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Hermann, 2020). For the special case of Belgium and the attitude of Vandervelde, see his contribution: E. Vandervelde, 'Mains libres vs. Internationalism: The Belgian Workers' Party's Internationalist Solidarity with Republican Spain in Times of National Withdrawal', in K. Christiaens, J. Nieuwenhuys, and Ch. Roemer (eds.), *International Solidarity in the Low Countries during the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives and Themes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 73–111; J. Polasky, 'The insider as outsider: Emile Vandervelde and the Spanish Civil War', *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine* 20 (1987), pp. 343–55.

27 Friedrich Adler published a pamphlet in which he attacked the first of the Moscow trials (against Zinov'ev, Kamenev, and others in August 1936): F. Adler, *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow* (London: Labour Publications, 1936). This was at best, however, a personal initiative and did not amount to an official statement by the LSI. But, even without public and official LSI statements, the general anti-communism and mistrust among the social democratic parties was obviously reinforced, and would receive another boost with the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

of the LSI more than anyone else since Hamburg, and was its ever-present public face, offered his resignation several times from 1937 onwards, but this was only accepted in 1940. One consequence of the organizational disputes was the various redefinitions of the share of votes that the individual member parties enjoyed on the executive – and then in the case of a congress. These redefinitions were above all directed at the outlawed parties, which were represented merely by exile groups from the ever-growing number of dictatorships. Many of them tended towards the International's left wing. In the meantime, however, the weight of the parties that operated legally and, in addition, attempted to remain neutral in international politics had increased. Their significance rose not least due to their financial weight. Polemically, there was talk of the 'pound bloc'.

The last years before the outbreak of war were thus nothing more than a farewell to the International. But the Munich Agreement was criticized as a diktat. After all, there were no guarantees for the democrats in Czechoslovakia and this had also sacrificed their member parties: the once so strong Sudeten German social democracy at first, followed by the Czech party. But the LSI had also initially come under pressure from the French and British parties. The former in particular had initially supported the agreement, although it soon engaged in a volte face.

Purely pacifist or neutralist (isolationist) arguments were now becoming increasingly apparent among some sectors of the International in the expectation that such an attitude would enable them to avoid taking part in a military confrontation with Hitler and Mussolini. This, on the other hand, brought together the opponents of any kind of 'appeasement'.

During these discussions – for example, at the plenary session of the executive in January 1939 – the question emerged of whether the International could even act uniformly under such conditions at the outbreak of war, as it had proclaimed in 1923. In such a state, meetings of the leadership bodies were now held that did not adopt fixed positions, or that just made meaningless declarations. The crisis of leadership worsened in the light of De Brouckère's refusal to continue the presidency he had held since 1935. His successor was the Dutchman Albarda, a spokesman for the 'neutrals'.

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, the International eventually proved to be incapable of action. The various parties pursued their policies according to the situation in their countries, and links with the LSI Secretariat fell apart. The International's publications ceased. For months, proposals were exchanged about calling a meeting of the executive. The neutrals declared that they could not travel to a warring country.

Finally, in February 1940, a meeting was held – for the last time – in Brussels. German aggression was opposed, but the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the Soviet attack on Finland were strongly criticized too. The leadership was further weakened by the acceptance of Adler's resignation from the post of secretary, without having a successor in mind, and by the election of a new chairman, Camille Huysmans, instead of Albarda. A commission was set up to draft a peace programme. But the executive meeting scheduled for May could no longer take place due to the German advance. Although the LSI was not officially dissolved until 1947, it had in fact already ceased to exist.

Conclusion

The high expectations at the time of the LSI's foundation had not been fulfilled. It had by no means become the politically determining factor that it had declared itself to be at its foundation. As an aggregate of numerous mass parties, it had millions behind it at its peak. As far as its ability to steer political developments in a certain direction was concerned, it overestimated its weight. At best, it only provided a safeguard against certain developments, that is, it was more defensive than proactive.

This was because the fundamental structural problem of the Second International, the exact relationship between the International and the national parties, remained unresolved. It is true that the primacy of the International was proclaimed once again in 1923. But when it came down to it, the national parties determined their policies from their respective conditions. Interaction between the International and the parties remained limited. Individual party decisions on issues of importance to the International were not infrequently made without regard to it, bypassing it or even disregarding it. In particular, the influence of those parties that exerted governmental influence mattered. They let their weight be felt.

The best – and saddest – example of this blockade on co-ordinated action in the International was its inability to go beyond humanitarian action in the Spanish case. But even before that, in the overall context of the Nazi conquest of power, which for the LSI meant the annihilation of its most important section, it had at first only stood on the sidelines and was then limited to acting in a delayed fashion.

Despite the impressive staging of a 'mass parade' of a proletarian army, the LSI congresses were above all propaganda shows. The meetings of the executive and bureau leadership bodies increasingly turned into confrontations,

especially as the political difficulties increased from the end of the 1920s. These confrontations ensured that politically significant decisions were avoided. The 'generational question' also proved to be a problem. Quite a few of the LSI's leading personalities had often already been in leading positions before 1914. This gave an impression of over-ageing, which also applied to many of the member parties. So while the LSI was able to assert itself against its communist rival, which enjoyed a much younger base, this was also due to the fact that the communist parties experienced dramatic and continuous changes and ruptures within a few years, and thus went through multiple changes in both membership and leadership. This often indirectly stabilized the LSI, which would otherwise have experienced more major internal upheavals, as it did in the light of the advance of fascism from 1933 onwards. But the fact that the LSI was rather marginalized on the eve of the world war, and even more so when it broke out, was finally a sum of its internal organizational and political contradictions, as well as of a global political situation that was driving almost unstoppably towards the Second World War.

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The Rise and Fall of the Asian Socialist Conference: 1952–1956

SU LIN LEWIS

In the 1950s and 1960s, conferences were essential in creating notions of solidarity and collective purpose among Asians and Africans, none more so than the high-profile 1955 Asian–African Conference in Bandung. The Asian Socialist Conference (ASC) met two years prior, in Rangoon in 1953, and a second time in Bombay in 1956. It was the brainchild of socialist leaders from Burma, India, Indonesia, and Japan. Kyaw Zaw Win has argued that the 1953 ASC served as a ‘precursor’ to Bandung, highlighting parallel issues of human rights, anti-colonialism, and Asian–African solidarity that appeared on the agenda of both events.¹ Yet there were also key differences between the resolutions of these two conferences, primarily in the ASC’s vision of an Asian welfare state and the promotion of equal rights for both women and men. While Bandung adopted some of the most high-profile internationalist resolutions of the ASC, it was also both a break and a parallel project. While the ASC created a forum for transnational democratic socialism in Asia and a neutralist ‘third force’, Bandung took a nationalist trajectory, visibly centred around charismatic male political leaders with populist appeal, including the PRC’s Zhou Enlai. While the legacies of Bandung live on today, the ASC has been largely forgotten. By 1960, mainstream nationalist parties had co-opted, marginalized, or censored socialist intellectuals, who had failed, ironically, to secure electoral support for their parties.

From its beginning, delegates at the ASC understood conferences to be ephemeral events, whose ‘spirit’ needed to be sustained through regular contact and the circulation of information. As such, the ASC was not a one-off event but an organizational body, with a secretariat based at Rangoon.

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¹ Kyaw Zaw Win, ‘The 1953 Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon: Precursor to the Bandung Conference’, in D. McDougall and A. Finnane (eds.), *Bandung 1955: Little Histories* (Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2010), pp. 43–55.

From here, it published a number of periodicals and pamphlets to reach Asian as well as African audiences, including *Socialist Asia* and the *Anti-Colonial Bureau Newsletter*, which covered anti-colonial struggles in the African continent, Malaya, and Indochina from 1954. Some of these publications are likely to have been read in the circles around key political leaders where socialist parties were not in power. The ASC maintained regular contact with the Socialist International and International Union of Socialist Youth. Bureau meetings were held in Hyderabad and Tokyo, as well as the Burmese hill station of Kalaw, after an attempt to hold a meeting in Bandung failed due to visa restrictions imposed by Sukarno's Government. The Second Asian Socialist Conference was held in Bombay in November 1956, in the midst of the Suez Crisis and Hungarian Uprising. As both an event and a 'permanent' organizational body, the Asian Socialist Conference maintained connections through the circulation of information and ideas, and a commitment to a more peaceful international world order both immediately before and after Bandung. The politics of its participants would, at times, be criticized by their compatriots as elitist and lofty, but their most lasting legacies came in their efforts to build a world free of exploitation, one that valued individual freedoms within egalitarian states.

Rangoon: Intersection of Socialist Networks

The first meeting of Asian socialists occurred in Delhi in 1947 at the Asian Relations Conference, hosted by Jawaharlal Nehru. Here, Asian socialists first mooted the idea of a special conference to discuss a common programme for the development of Asia. It was felt, Sjahrir later recounted, that 'the ideology for a united Asia should have a more integrated content'.² The emerging ideological solidarity between socialist parties occurred as Indian, Indonesian, and Burmese socialists sought to carve out a place within the messy and divisive realm of post-colonial politics. Rapid transitions to parliamentary democracy were accompanied by heightened political factionalism that drastically split the unified fronts of anti-colonial resistance. Socialist parties competed with communists, religious parties, the military, and mass nationalist parties centred around charismatic leaders. While Burmese and Indonesian socialist parties had once been aligned with more hardline Marxists during the anti-Japanese resistance era, they had now split due to differences in ideology and strategy.

The leaders of Indonesian and Indian socialist parties studied the workings of socialism both at home and abroad. Sjahrir, the head of the Indonesian

2 S. Sjahrir, 'Reflections', *Socialist Asia*, Anniversary issue 2, 10 (1954).

Socialist Party, spent his student years in interwar Europe, working with trade unions and the youth wing of the Dutch Social Democratic Workers' Party. He returned to Java and began working extensively with the Indonesian labour movement.³ He led part of the resistance movement against the Japanese and founded the Socialist Party through a merger with Amir Sjahrifuddin's 'socialist' party in 1945.⁴ Sjahrir's technocratic faith in a mixed economy, a socialist state that made room for private enterprise, ultimately collided with Amir's more populist and orthodox commitment to socialism.⁵ The party split in 1948; Amir sought mass support and formed coalitions with the Indonesian Communist Party, while Sjahrir cultivated a 'cadre' party to develop an ordered plan for the development of the state.⁶

Like Sjahrir, the founders of the Praja Socialist Party in India also cut their political teeth in the world of anti-colonial internationalism in Europe. Ram Manohar Lohia studied in 1920s Berlin, a haven for anti-colonial activists in Europe and later the operative centre for the League Against Imperialism.⁷ In the 1930s, Nehru appointed Lohia, then an active member of the Indian National Congress (INC), to the party's foreign department, where he cultivated ties with freedom movements across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. After the assassination of Gandhi, his mentor, Lohia left the INC in 1948 to help form a progressive alternative in the Congress Socialist Party, joining with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party.⁸ The new Praja Socialist Party, led by Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Asoka Mehta, was by 1952 the major opposition party to the INC. While Nehru is generally associated with generating the idea of 'non-alignment',⁹ Lohia had put forth his idea of a 'Third Camp' in 1950, which would act as an inter-governmental bloc,

3 R. Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1994), pp. 75–7, 93–5 (I am indebted to this rich and sensitive biography of Sjahrir, as later footnotes will show); J. Suryomenggolo, *Organising under the Revolution: Unions and the State in Java, 1945–48* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), pp. 66–7.

4 See G. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 158; B. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944–1946* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); J. D. Legge, *Intellectuals and Nationalism in Indonesia: A Study of the Following Recruited by Sutan Sjahrir in Occupied Jakarta* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1988), p. 171.

5 Legge, *Intellectuals and Nationalism*, p. 176.

6 On the PSI's approach to politics, see H. Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 130.

7 See F. Petersson, 'Hub of the anti-imperialist movement: the League Against Imperialism and Berlin, 1927–1933', *Interventions* 16, 1 (2014), pp. 49–71.

8 S. Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

9 L. Lüthi, 'Non-alignment, 1946–1965: its establishment and struggle against Afro-Asianism', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, 2 (2016), p. 203.

and take the form of a more dynamic 'Third Force' at the popular level.¹⁰ Both ideas were taken up in the writings and speeches of his Indonesian and Burmese colleagues. For Lohia, it was Asia, and later Afro-Asia, that could begin a 'Third Camp' with a clean slate, one which, unlike Europe, could adopt a position of genuine neutrality.¹¹ Due to colonialism, Asia had fundamentally different problems of economic development from those of Europe.¹² Mehta, meanwhile, looked towards Europe and 'evolutionary socialism', seeing democratic socialism as a reply to the 'dehumanization caused by totalitarian communism'.¹³

In 1951, Lohia and his party travelled to Japan to meet with delegates of the Japanese Socialist Party, which had split into right and left factions due to ideological differences over the origins of the Korean War.¹⁴ As Heonik Kwon has argued, the Korean War was the 'first violent manifestation of the bipolar global order', one that provoked heated public debate over its origins both domestically and internationally.¹⁵ The Japanese Socialist Party's left faction became more vocally committed to unarmed neutralism; it quickly committed its support to Lohia's notion of an Asian 'Third Force', taking a more anti-American and pro-Asian stance in the midst of America's occupation in post-war Japan.¹⁶ The right, meanwhile, rejected 'third force neutralism' on account of its fears of communism, looking instead to actively promote the spread of democratic socialism and affiliate with the Socialist International. The two sides were united in denouncing their 'fascist' opponents, distancing themselves from the policy pursued by Japanese militarists in the past, and believed in the importance of building ties with socialist counterparts in Asia, not least because of their interest in co-operative economic development.

Unlike Sjahrir and Lohia, the founders of the Burma Socialist Party were schooled not in Europe but in Rangoon University, a hotbed of anti-imperial sentiment by the 1930s.¹⁷ U Nu, U Ba Swe, and U Kyaw Nyein had all been students in the 1930s, with U Ba Swe leading a major anti-colonial protest that

10 J. N. Lohia, *The Third Camp in World Affairs* (Bombay: Praja Socialist Party, 1950), p. 45.

11 Ibid., pp. 49–50.

12 G. Krishan, 'Rammanohar Lohia: an appreciation', *Economic and Political Weekly* 3, 26/27 (1968), p. 1109.

13 A. Mehta, 'Final lap', *Socialist Asia* 1, 4 (1952), p. 15; A. Mehta, *Studies in Asian Socialism* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1959). Differences between Lohia's and Mehta's thought are also noted in T. Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 448.

14 J. A. Stockwin, 'The Neutralist Policy of the Japan Socialist Party', PhD dissertation, Australian National University, Canberra, 1964.

15 H. Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

16 Stockwin, 'Neutralist Policy of the Japan Socialist Party', p. 2.

17 Aye Kyaw, *The Voice of Young Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1993).

brought together students with oil workers. In 1944, born out of the resistance to the Japanese, they formed the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), a coalition of socialists and communists, supporters in peasant associations, trade unions, and women's, youth, and ethnic organisations, with the Burma Socialist Party formed in 1945.¹⁸ As with the Japanese Socialist Party, the Korean War was also an important flashpoint in splitting the AFPFL coalition after the war. Burma, loyal to the United Nations (UN), voted with the General Assembly to condemn the North Koreans as aggressors (a vote on which India and Indonesia abstained).¹⁹ This split the Burma Socialist Party in 1950, with a large faction forming the Burma Workers and Peasants Party (BWPP) and aligning itself with the Eastern bloc, pledging to uphold Marxist–Leninist principles.²⁰ The following year, Burma held its first elections, with the AFPFL winning an overwhelming victory, and the BWPP in opposition. With the Burma Socialist Party as the largest party in the coalition, Burma became the first Asian country to be led by a socialist government.

Rangoon thus became a transnational hub for like-minded socialists from Indonesia, India, Burma, and Japan to engage in the work of socialist internationalism with an Asian inflection. The speech given by U Kyaw Nyein to delegates at the preparatory meeting stressed a legacy of common suffering, and the need for Asian socialist parties to look to each other to solve common problems. Echoing Lohia's notion of a 'Third Camp', U Kyaw Nyein argued:

It is for Asian Socialist Parties to head a Third Camp, and try their level best to save the world from the Third Great War while they still can. It is for the Asian Socialist Parties to offer an alternative to Capitalist Democracy and Totalitarian Communism namely in the form of Democratic Socialism . . . World Public Opinion will be with us.²¹

The idea that Asian socialists should continue to cultivate the support of 'public opinion', in favour of peace, was a central principle of the organization. The Preparatory Meeting resulted in an agreement not only to co-organize the First Asian Socialist Conference but also to act as an information hub, gathering news about Asian socialist parties from Cairo to Tokyo. From 1952, a fortnightly bulletin, *Socialist Asia*, published news of various socialist parties and preparations for the conference, as well as short articles by core

18 See Kyaw Zaw Win, 'A History of the Burma Socialist Party (1930–1964)', PhD dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2008.

19 F. N. Trager, 'Burma's foreign policy, 1948–1956: neutralism, third force, and rice', *Journal of Asian Studies* 16, 1 (1956), pp. 89–102 at p. 91.

20 Ibid. 21 U Kyaw Nyein, 'Common ties that bind us together', *Socialist Asia* 1, 3 (1952).

members of the committee on various themes related to socialism, the 'Third Force', and post-colonial politics.

The First Asian Socialist Conference took place across a full week from 6 to 15 January. Official delegates included the Japanese, Indonesian, Burmese, and Indian socialist parties as well as the Pan-Malayan Labour Party, the Socialist Party of Pakistan, the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon, the Socialist Party of Israel (Mapai), and the Socialist Party of Egypt. 'Observers' came from Tunisia, Gold Coast, Uganda, Algeria, Kenya, and Nepal. Invitations were also sent to nationalist parties in Syria, Iraq, Gold Coast, and Nigeria, who expressed solidarity with the Asian socialist project but were unable to afford the flight. As the former prime minister who had presided over Burma's independence, Clement Attlee, representing the Socialist International, was the most high-profile guest at the conference and hosted by U Nu. The Burmese press lauded Attlee's experience as a 'social worker in the slums of East London' to ratify his socialist credentials.²² Also present as 'fraternal delegates' were members of the Socialist International, the International Union of Socialist Youths, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism. While European socialists engaged with Asian socialists to expand and globalize their membership, Asian socialists used the Socialist International and its contacts to extend their own networks across 'Asia', broadly from Egypt to Japan.

Unlike other conferences of the Afro-Asian era or even conferences of the Socialist International,²³ the Asian Socialist Conference was conducted in English, without translators. This speaks to the multilingualism of its participants and the fluency of delegates schooled in British colonial institutions and mission schools. Saul Rose, who attended the conference, noted that because English was the official language, as at the Asian Relations Conference, 'The conference was rarely delayed by the need for translation. Still more important, the participants were able to meet and talk informally and without intermediaries outside the conference rooms.'²⁴ These informal, fluid conversations led to an emerging sense of affinity between conference delegates and worked to build a collective shared purpose. Rose argued that the

22 'Asian Socialist Conference: Attlee's Forthcoming Visit to Rangoon', *The Burman*, 19 December 1952.

23 P. Dogliani, 'The Fate of Socialist Internationalism', in G. Sluga and P. Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 38–60.

24 Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, p. 7.

‘advantage accrued to the massive and talkative Indian delegation’. The numbers reflect some truth in this: the Praja Socialist Party sent seventy-seven delegates, compared with the twenty-six delegates of the Indonesian Socialist Party, the second-largest group. Rose noted that a disadvantage was suffered by Japanese, Indonesians, and Yugoslavia’s Milovan Djilas. But Djilas’ ideas were nonetheless communicated fluently in Burma’s English-language press, and he hosted a number of seminars and debates during the conference. Some Indonesian socialists had learned English and other European languages in government secondary schools, or as journalists reading the Reuters wires.²⁵ English versions of speeches given in other languages were to be provided with the help of the delegations concerned.²⁶

This gathering of intellectuals and politicians did not take place solely behind closed doors. A mass rally took place with 100,000 members of the Burmese public in attendance; the high number likely attributable to U Ba Swe’s chairmanship of the Burma Trade Union Congress and its large organizational reach.²⁷ Speeches from Asian and African socialist leaders drummed up support for anti-colonial solidarity. Margaret Pope, representing the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism, spoke on behalf of delegates from Morocco who were unable to attend.²⁸ While committee meetings were held during the day, lively seminars, open to the press and the public, were held in City Hall in the evenings. In his seminar on ‘Nationalism and Internationalism’, Sjahrir gave a broad overview of the development of European and Asian nationalism and spoke on the necessity of the UN as a governing world body, inciting a lively discussion between Scandinavian, Yugoslavian, and Asian socialists on the challenges of international co-operation.²⁹ Attlee’s seminar on parliamentary democracy was interrupted by the fiery Indian intellectual G. K. Reddy, who accused European socialists of failing to apply universal socialist principles in upholding colonialism.³⁰ Taieb Salim gave a rousing seminar on ‘Freedom Movements in Africa’, urging all socialists to end the ‘massacres taking place in Tunisia and Morocco’ and imploring Asian socialists to impress upon the Socialist

25 Legge, *Intellectuals and Nationalism*, p. 119.

26 ‘Report of the First Asian Socialist Conference’, Rangoon, 1953, p. 90 (hereafter ‘First ASC Report’).

27 Photo caption, *New Times of Burma*, 13 January 1953.

28 ‘Asian Socialist Conference Sponsors at BAA Stadium’, *New Times of Burma*, 13 January 1953.

29 S. Sjahrir, *Nationalism and Internationalism* (Rangoon: Asian Socialist Conference, 1953).

30 ‘Relations between European and Asian Socialists: Lively Discussions at City Hall’, *New Times of Burma*, 14 January 1953; ‘Political Harangues Mar Socialist Seminar’, *The Nation*, 14 January 1953.

International the urgency of putting an end to the violence; this resulted in a bitter clash with French socialist André Bidet, carrying the discussion past midnight.³¹ Reports of the Socialist International focused on the rabid 'nationalism' of socialists at the conference, wounded by the anti-colonial animosity directed at European delegates.

As Peter Van Kemseke and Talbot Imlay have argued, the formation of the Asian Socialist Conference generated excitement among European socialists, who sought a more active engagement with the decolonizing world.³² Due to increasing disenchantment with European regionalism, European socialists put the development of the 'Third World' on their foreign policy agenda, seeking to bring the Asian Socialist Conference into their fold.³³ During the conference, Asian socialists pushed back on this, continually arguing that they had different goals and aims from those of European socialists due to shared histories of colonialism and the agricultural base of their economies. This is vividly captured in a story recounted by Indonesian socialist Hamid Algadri in his memoirs, when one of the British Labour delegation woke him in his hotel room late at night to find out why the Asian socialists were refusing to unite with the Socialist International.³⁴ Algadri, confused, had told him he was not the right person to ask, but that he was inclined to agree with the resolution, based on the great differences in wages, rights, and living standards between the British and Indonesian labourer. When the European socialist outlined plans for providing aid to 'underdeveloped areas', Algadri asked why British workers would give up part of their hard-earned rights and income to help socialists in Asia, and that in comparison with the wages of an Asian labourer, the European labourer was a 'capitalist'.³⁵ After a moment of silence, the European acknowledged that he was beginning to understand the Asian socialist position and left.³⁶ This vignette captures the scepticism with which Asian socialists viewed the Socialist International and its failure to recognize the different contexts and struggles facing workers in the colonial world, and echoes points made by Asian feminists in refusing to be co-opted

31 'Tunisian Sounds off on Colonialism Issue', *The Nation*, 10 January 1953.

32 Imlay, *Practice of International Socialism*; P. Van Kemseke, *Towards an Era of Development: The Globalization of Socialism and Christian Democracy, 1945–1965* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006).

33 See Van Kemseke, *Towards an Era of Development*; Imlay, *Practice of International Socialism*.

34 This was probably Saul Rose, the only other official delegate of the British Labour Party apart from Attlee.

35 A similar point is made in Lohia, *Third Camp*, pp. 6–7.

36 Hamid Algadri, *Mengarungi Indonesia. Memora Perintis Kemerdekaan* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1999), pp. 115–16.

within European-led international women's movements.³⁷ In the end, ASC delegates resolved not to join the Socialist International, but agreed to co-ordinate with the body as a separate organization.

In an analysis of the conference that appeared in Indonesian socialist periodicals, the socialist intellectual Sujatmoko argued that the conference had succeeded in overcoming the diversity of views on socialism within Asia. While socialism in Japan developed within an industrial economy, he argued, a gulf of experience existed between colonized and non-colonized countries. Socialism in India could not be separated from the influence of Gandhi, while socialism in Egypt involved hostility towards the West. The Indian socialist party, he argued, was somewhat 'impractical', having not had the experience of governing. And yet, he concluded, Asian socialists had come together with an awareness of their differences, convinced about the unity of the socialist movement as an antidote to both communism and capitalism. While Asian socialists were united in the shared history of colonialism and the under-development of the economy, they were conscious that the Socialist International would not be able to meet their needs.³⁸ Nationalism, he argued, was a 'framework' (*rangka*) for the struggle of socialism in Asia. The views of European socialists, who saw anti-colonialism as the key concern of Asian socialists, failed to consider their end goal: that liberation was a pathway for a newer, better socialism attuned to the realities of Asia and Africa.

Drafting the Post-Colonial State and a New International Order

If the Bandung Conference outlined the principles of diplomatic and economic co-operation between emerging nations of the Third World, the Asian Socialist Conference was first and foremost concerned with outlining the ideal character of the post-colonial state, one that valued collective social welfare as well as individual rights. Despite the claims of European socialists that Asian socialists were always divided, and 'agreed on little else'³⁹ other than anti-colonial nationalism, this set of resolutions indicates a strong collective belief in the welfare state as a basis of social security, along with

37 See, for instance, Sumita Mukherjee, 'The All-Asian Women's Conference 1931: Indian women and their leadership of a pan-Asian feminist organisation', *Women's History Review* 26, 3 (2017), pp. 363–81.

38 Sujatmoko, 'Socialist Asia', *Sikap* 4, 26 January 1953 (reprinted from *Siasat*).

39 Imlay, *Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, p. 1110.

a protection of democratic rights. While the European welfare state provided a model, Asian socialists devised these plans in committee meetings that did not include European counterparts, and they echo many of the rights enshrined in the first constitutions of Indonesia, Burma, and India. Sjahrir, who had drafted Indonesia's 1949 constitution, enshrined his faith in parliamentary democracy when he travelled throughout Europe as a student and activist. In Sjahrir's political hierarchy of the 1950s, Scandinavian countries were at the top, while France and Britain were generally absent; this world-view disregarded the United States and the Soviet Union, which had not yet made it into the community of welfare states.⁴⁰ While Sjahrir seemed to have jettisoned the British model, Mehta and Lohia made frequent reference to the success of Scandinavia and Labour Britain in providing a model that catered for the welfare of all. The adoption of the welfare state model, then, signalled a method of cutting across the warring camps of the Cold War.

The first set of resolutions defined socialism as distinct from totalitarianism, and stated that it would be realized through democratic means. Socialism would uphold the 'democratic rights of the people, namely freedom of speech, of organization, of assembly, of faith and conscience, of election of representative bodies', rights to be 'granted to all'.⁴¹ It would, crucially, imply the right of opposition parties to exist and operate. It would safeguard basic economic and social rights, including the right to work, free medical care, support for the elderly, the 'right of children and the young to good care', and the right to decent housing.⁴² In recognition of the different applications of socialism in different country contexts, it advocated mutual collaboration between socialist movements.

In contrast to the Bandung resolutions, which make no mention of women's rights, the Asian Socialist Conference, as in India's constitution, advocated full equal rights to women regardless of caste or creed, and pledged 'to be the vehicle of ensuring to women full equality of rights and dignity of position'.⁴³ Elsewhere, the resolutions acknowledged 'the social and political handicaps under which women in Asia suffer', and advocated that Asian socialists 'should combat prejudice and ignorance which militate against enjoyment of equal rights by women'.⁴⁴ As members of a modern, cosmopolitan elite, these socialist intellectuals were keen to portray themselves as attuned to progressive ideals of gender equality.⁴⁵ Given the

40 Mrázek, *Sjahrir*, p. 429. 41 First ASC Report, p. 94. 42 Ibid. 43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 99.

45 K. Jayawardene, *Nationalism and Feminism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

prominence of the Burmese and Indonesian delegations, the more deeply rooted South-East Asian perception of women as having ‘high status’ also needs to be taken into account, as do Lohia’s progressive views on gender and caste equality in India.⁴⁶ Moreover, unlike in Bandung, where women were prominently ‘invisible’, female delegates were present at the ASC, including six Indian female delegates and at least three Japanese female delegates.⁴⁷ The Indonesian delegation included Maria Ulfah Santoso, Indonesia’s first female cabinet minister and a close friend of Sjahrir; the two had studied together in the Netherlands when Santoso was pursuing a law degree. The participation of these women, and their friendships with leading male socialists, is likely to have contributed to the shaping of ASC resolutions on gender equality.

The socialist state, built on equality between peoples, would be mirrored in the international realm by the equality of states. The second set of resolutions thus centred on ‘Asia and World Peace’. Again, the resolutions advocated democratic means, rather than revolution, as the key to Asia’s re-emergence in world politics.⁴⁸ They pledged an end to the subjection, degradation, and poverty caused by colonial rule. While Asian socialists upheld the principles of the UN Charter as the basis for world peace, they also acknowledged the imbalances and processes of polarization manifest in the structure of the UN (particularly the exclusivity of the Security Council). More forcefully, it was up to Asian nations to enable and uphold the principles of the UN charter as a basis of justice, peace, and equality. As with Bandung, this set of resolutions argued for the importance of human rights, associated with the struggles against colonial oppression.⁴⁹

For these Asian socialists, the basis of the state rested on a rational, egalitarian social order, rather than revolutionary spirit. The focus on anti-colonial nationalism did not preclude an appreciation for minority rights: this was encapsulated in the belief that the state would address the equality of all,

46 See B. Andaya, *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006); Ch. Ikeya, ‘The “traditional” high status of women in Burma: a historical reconsideration’, *Journal of Burma Studies* 10, 1 (2005), pp. 51–81; on Lohia, see J. Shrivastava, ‘Locating Lohia in feminist theory’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 49, 5 (2014), pp. 69–74.

47 N. Shimazu, ‘Women “Performing” Diplomacy at the Bandung Conference of 1955’, in D. Khudori (ed.), *Bandung at 60: New Insights and Emerging Forces* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), pp. 34–49.

48 First ASC Report, p. 95.

49 On post-colonial engagements with rights discourses, see R. Burke, ‘“The compelling dialogue of freedom”: human rights at the Bandung Conference’, *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, 4 (2006), pp. 947–65 at p. 962.

irrespective of caste or creed. We see in resolutions on 'Common Asian Problems' a condemnation of religious and communal fanaticism, cautioning against the rise of religious and ethnic nationalism. We see reference to the rise of 'political apathy' in Asia and the need for 'political education' and 'purposeful action'.⁵⁰ Along with a condemnation of foreign exploitation and feudalism, underlying many of these resolutions was a distrust of the 'ignorance of the common masses'⁵¹ in becoming victims of foreign exploitation, indigenous feudalism, and extremism. To counter this, the state's task was to ensure that all citizens would engage in economic and political activity. While Asian socialists were fundamentally concerned with addressing exploitation caused by ignorance and lack of information, this attitude towards the public was often what led to accusations of elitism and consequently caused socialist parties to lose elections, as we shall see.

While recognizing its roots in European socialism, Asian socialists advocated a different vision of development: 'While the democratic, egalitarian and distributive impulses and achievements of European socialism evoke the admiration of Asia, Asian socialism must be dynamic instead of gradual, and, if necessary, must develop its own methods of peaceful mass action.'⁵² The basis for agrarian development in Asia included radical land reforms that abolished feudalism and landlordism, introducing co-operatives, agricultural finance, and collective farms. The Israeli experience of the kibbutz was a model for Asian socialists, as were indigenous models of village co-operation. Economic development relied on a planned economy that ensured ownership and control over the means of production, and 'preferably State ownership of that sector of economy where capital tends to accumulate, such as financial institutions like banks and insurance companies, big industries and foreign trade'.⁵³ This mirrored the experience of the post-colonial Burmese state, which, well before Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Company, had nationalized a number of foreign assets and activities, including foreign-owned transport and teak firms that had reaped the profits from Burma's raw materials.

The final set of resolutions laid the basis for the support of liberation movements in South-East Asia and the African continent. Asian socialists sought active co-operation with freedom struggles to 'give these movements a socialist orientation' and safeguard them from the designs of capitalists and communists. They urged representatives of the Socialist International and International Union of Socialist Youth to take a firm stance on the colonial

50 First ASC Report, p. 99. 51 Ibid., p. 98. 52 Ibid., pp. 99–100. 53 Ibid.

question and end the repression of liberation movements in Asia and Africa. The ASC demanded that detained nationalist leaders in Malaya and Kenya be immediately released, that freedom of assembly and the press be immediately restored in Kenya, and that the demands of the Uganda National Congress for elections be immediately granted. It condemned policies of racial supremacy in South Africa, and expressed full support for liberation movements in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. There was a significant omission of Indochina in its list of Asian countries to be liberated from colonialism.⁵⁴ But reports of the conference that appeared in Indonesia show that Indochina was clearly discussed as a critique of French colonial policy.⁵⁵ In a subsequent bureau meeting at Hyderabad, U Kyaw Nyein expressed his frustration that Ho Chi Minh, with whom the socialists had once maintained close relations, had been pushed further towards Russia and China, partly because of India's refusal to take a stand on the French re-occupation of Indochina, as they had with the Dutch re-occupation of Indonesia; the Indonesian delegate agreed that the ASC should take a stand on Vietnamese independence, regardless of Ho's commitment to communism.⁵⁶ The ASC decided it could no longer look passively on the situation in Indochina; a 'fact-finding' mission was planned for the following year to gather information and mobilize world public opinion.⁵⁷

After ten days of committee meetings, the groundwork of Asian socialism was thus set forth in the conference's joint resolutions. The ASC was to be the vehicle to ensure that the world lived up to the internationalist principles of the UN and promote the self-determination of all nations in the interests of world peace. At its heart was the democratic socialist state, one that would be arrived at by each country by means suitable to local conditions, and enable every individual, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or class, to develop to their fullest potential, with adequate access to education, health, and social services. It would temper the excesses of unfettered capitalism and foreign exploitation through nationalization of specific industries and focus on grassroots development from the village level up; it would avoid the totalitarian impulses of Soviet communism through its basis in democratic institutions that protected freedom of speech and association. As Sujatmoko had observed, nationalism

54 Trager, 'Burma's foreign policy', p. 95.

55 Despatch from the US Embassy, Jakarta, to Department of State, 'Abadi comments on the Rangoon Socialist Conference', 20 January 1953, RG 85 US Embassy, Burma 1953–1955, Box 3, National Archives and Records Administration (USA) (NARA) asyumi report.

56 'Report of the Bureau Meeting of the Asian Socialist Conference held at Hyderabad', in Myanmar National Archives AG-15/3(3) Acc-062 (hereafter Hyderabad Report).

57 Ibid.

was to be the *rangka*, the framework, for the spread of democratic socialism throughout the post-colonial world. Whether the public would endorse this vision was another story.

Transnational Networking and National Implosion

The outcome of the Asian Socialist Conference was an agreement to establish a permanent secretariat at Rangoon. An office was set up at the address of the Burma Socialist Party in a leafy residential area of Rangoon. U Ba Swe was unanimously elected ASC chairman, but over the next three years the work of the ASC was shared between a dedicated set of socialist organizers, all in place by the end of December 1953. The ASC's general secretary, from Indonesia, was Wijono, who temporarily settled in Rangoon with his wife Sujatin, who was active in the Indonesian socialist and women's movements. Madhu Limaye and Madhav Gokhale, of the Praja Socialist Party,



Fig. 14.1 U Ba Swe, chairman of the Asian Socialist Conference, addressing the mass rally on Dependent Peoples' Freedom Day, Rangoon, 30 October 1954. (Photograph by Arno Scholz/International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)

consecutively served as joint secretaries from India, along with Watanabe Roo and Tatebayashi Chisato from the Japanese Socialist Party. U Hla Aung, formerly a member of Burma's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, became joint-secretary alongside his duties as a Burmese delegate to the UN. In 1953, contact had been made with James Markham, a London-educated journalist and editor of the official organ of Kwame Nkruma's Convention People's Party, and one of three Ghanaian delegates to the Bandung conference in 1955. Markham was appointed as the third ASC joint-secretary, joining the team at Rangoon to run the Anti-Colonial Bureau, dedicated to supporting liberation movements in Malaya and Africa.⁵⁸

With the publication of *Socialist Asia*, between 1952 and 1957, and the *Anti-Colonial Bureau Newsletter*, edited by Markham between 1954 and 1955, Rangoon became an information hub for socialism and anti-colonial solidarity. Subscriber numbers proved disappointing compared with the number of circulars sent out to socialist parties around the world.⁵⁹ But these publications nonetheless served as an important outlet for the more active members of the Asian Socialist Conference to exchange ideas and reach out to new audiences. The office hosted a number of international visitors, aided by the prominence of Rangoon on international air routes. The ASC's foot-soldiers engaged in a flurry of transnational networking across Asia and Africa. In 1953, Wijono travelled to Stockholm for the Third Congress of the Socialist International, criticizing European socialist parties for refusing to take a strong stance against colonialism. After travelling to Central Africa and Gold Coast in December 1953, U Hla Aung addressed the UN General Assembly. Referring to the colonial exploitation he had witnessed in Africa, he accused the collective conscience of the world of being 'dulled by its preoccupations with the cold war' and criticized the United States for failing to intervene.⁶⁰ In 1954, Wijono led the aforementioned study mission to Indochina and Malaya with Watanabe and Markham to study social, economic, and political conditions in both countries. In various international fora, these representatives campaigned vigorously against the continuation of colonialism and stressed the need to de-escalate Cold War tensions through disarmament and allegiance to UN principles. These protests proved effective: by 1956, arguments within the Socialist International – particularly of British and

58 For more on Markham, see G. McCann, 'Where was the Afro in Afro-Asian solidarity? Africa's "Bandung moment" in 1950s Asia', *Journal of World History* 30, 1 (2019), pp. 89–123 at pp. 102–3.

59 Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, p. 239; Hyderabad Report.

60 'The problems of the colonial peoples', *Anti-Colonial Bureau* 6 (1955).

Scandinavian socialists against the French – made reference to the disenchantment of socialist brothers in Asia with European socialists' colonial policies.⁶¹

Despite these overtures to internationalism, one of the most discernible tensions emerging within the Asian Socialist Conference was between delegates from Israel and Arab nations. Israel's presence at the Rangoon conference was due to the increasingly close ties between Burma and Israel as new socialist nations in the post-war period. Egyptian delegates walked out of the conference due to the presence of Israel's Moshe Sharrett; though socialist parties from Indonesia and Pakistan, initially wary about Israel's presence, were apparently won over by the personable nature of the Israeli delegates.⁶² By the time of the Hyderabad meeting in 1953, overtures to Arab parties had been made, probably stemming from the relationship between Indian and Lebanese socialists; Kamal Djumblatt, the head of Lebanon's Progressive Socialist Party, had visited India in 1951, writing a joint manifesto with Praja socialists rejecting colonialism as well as militaristic and xenophobic nationalism, and promoting the Third Force as an instrument of peace.⁶³ Djumblatt and his wife attended the Hyderabad meeting as delegates and spoke to the challenges faced by socialists in west Asia, who were struggling against military dictatorship, local feudalism, and imperialist intrigues in a strategic and rich oil-producing region.⁶⁴ He advocated that the ASC send greetings to all west Asian socialist parties, whether dissolved, underground, or in exile, and support the position of Egypt on Suez. Other tensions emerged at the meeting, including the question of how to deal with Communist China: Mehta and Djumblatt argued that the ASC should not have any contact with Chinese communists because of their closeness to Soviet Russia, while the Burmese referred to Mao's movement as independent, arguing that if denied outside contacts China would be pushed even further into the Soviet camp.⁶⁵

The third bureau meeting of the Asian Socialist Conference was planned in Bandung for April 1954, but Sukarno's Government refused to grant visas to Israeli socialists for fear of offending Arab nations, to which it was cultivating close ties. With the plan to hold the meeting in Bandung cancelled, the ASC's third bureau meeting was moved to Kalaw, a breezy former hill station in Burma's Shan state. U Ba Swe began the meeting with a strong criticism of the Indonesian government's action in obstructing the Bandung meeting, as

61 Imlay, *Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, p. 1118.

62 Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, p. 9.

63 'The right of the way', *Socialist Asia* 2, 10 (1954), pp. 10–11. 64 Hyderabad Report.

65 Ibid.

well as a criticism of the Pakistan government for refusing visas to delegates from the Praja Socialist Party to attend the National Conference of the Pakistan Socialist Party.⁶⁶ The ASC issued a statement ‘deploping the actions of national governments seeking to obstruct the principles of democracy and international understanding’, arguing that the ‘division of Asia along communal lines cannot but have disastrous consequences’.⁶⁷ In these early years of post-colonial democracy, the transnational ties among socialists across Asia were hampered by national governments policing their borders and dictating who came in and out.

Ideological fissures between Asian socialists deepened at the Kalaw meeting. U Kyaw Nyein described Soviet imperialism as ‘neo-colonialism’, more dangerous than the old imperialism in being ‘more ruthless, more systematic, and more blatantly justified in the name of the world Communist revolution’.⁶⁸ Lohia publicly disagreed, objecting to any implication that ‘one or other form of imperialism was less bad’ and pointing to the ‘barbaric’ actions carried out by capitalist imperialisms in Indochina and Kenya.⁶⁹ For both Lohia and U Kyaw Nyein, despite their apparent differences, maintaining a sense of neutrality between the two camps was of utmost importance. The unifying force of anti-colonial nationalism helped to iron over these differences. A ‘Declaration on Colonialism’ was put forth, upholding the right to self-determination as recognized by the UN Charter. Referring to freedom fighters around the world, the declaration stated: ‘All genuine democrats fully share with these fighters their passionate desire for human rights and freedom, and therefore associate themselves with the struggle against colonial oppression and for a world order free from slavery, hunger, political terror and war.’⁷⁰

While the ASC pledged its commitment to the principles of internationalism, many of its socialist parties faced continuing domestic struggles in coming to power. Apart from the Burmese socialists, the core group of members of the Asian Socialist Conference were not only losing elections to bigger, more populist nationalist parties, but suffering splits within their own ranks. The Praja Socialist Party, once an effective opposition to the Congress Party, had

66 Kalaw Report (IUSY), ‘Asian Bureau May Formulate Plans for Korea, Indochina’, *The Nation*, 26 May 1954.

67 ‘Bureau ASC Statement’, in International Union of Socialist Youth Archives, folder 1511, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

68 Despatch from British Embassy, Rangoon to Anthony Eden, 1954, in FO 371/111928; ‘A Timely Definition’, *The Nation*, 25 May 1954.

69 Lohia speech to the ASC Bureau meeting in Kalaw, 1954 (The National Archives (UK), Kew).

70 Report of the ASC Bureau Meeting in Kalaw, 1954, Myanmar National Archives.

split by 1955, with Lohia starting a new party. India's ruling Congress Party, tacking leftwards, began co-opting various members of the Praja Socialist Party, including Mehta.⁷¹ Jayaprakash Narayan turned to protest and activism.⁷² In Indonesia, membership of the Indonesian Socialist Party numbered 50,000, but the Communist Party had ten times this and the Indonesian Nationalist Party had membership in the millions. In September 1955, a few months after the Bandung conference, the Indonesian Socialist Party stood for elections and lost miserably. This was partly due to a lack of campaigning, with Sjahrir refusing to engage in 'cheap politics' and 'demagoguery', while Sukarno's Indonesian Nationalist Party cultivated a cult of personality around its leader, employing nationalist symbols, slogans, and theatricality.⁷³ The PSI had focused on establishing itself as an intellectual 'cadre' party seeking to educate the people; popular mobilization would come later.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Burma's formidable Socialist Party suffered a shock after the general elections in 1956, where the AFPFL coalition scraped a majority, losing seats to an opposition left-wing coalition known as the National United Front. U Ba Swe blamed communist insurgents in the countryside, who helped members of the opposition in villages and spent 'fantastic sums of money' swaying people to their side.⁷⁵ In the early Cold War, as local communist parties gained power by providing an alternative to the economic dislocations of the post-colonial era, the technocratic ideals of democratic socialism proved a hard sell.

In November 1956, the Asian Socialist Conference convened its second major conference in Bombay, the industrial heartland of the Praja Socialist Party.⁷⁶ New delegations appeared from Cambodia and Ceylon. Delegates from further afield included Joseph Murumbi from Kenya and a member of the Popular Socialist Party of Chile. There were notable absences, particularly from Arab nations. Two major events formed the international backdrop of the conference: the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution. A subcommittee of representatives from India, Burma, Indonesia, and Japan drafted an initial resolution on the two crises. U Ba Swe, now Burma's prime minister, opened the conference with a speech lambasting

71 Lewis P. Fickett, 'The Praja Socialist Party of India, 1952–1972: a final assessment', *Asian Survey* 13, 9 (1973), pp. 826–32.

72 D. Kent-Carrasco, 'A battle over meanings: Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and the trajectories of socialism in early independent India', *Global Intellectual History* 2, 3 (2017), pp. 370–88 at p. 384.

73 Mrázek, *Sjahrir*, p. 430; Feith, *Decline of Constitutional Democracy*, p. 316.

74 Feith, *Decline of Constitutional Democracy*, p. 130.

75 A. Gordon, *On Becoming Alijah* (Kuala Lumpur: Alijah Gordon, 2003), p. 316.

76 J. P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India: M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 228.

Britain and France, as members of the Security Council, who had ‘wantonly attacked Egypt . . . All moral codes and human decency on which the UN was founded were thus shattered.’⁷⁷ He also referred to the struggle of both Poland and Hungary in seeking independence from Soviet control. Meanwhile, he paid tribute to the UN and its agencies for raising living standards and upholding human rights. Despite all its teething problems, the Asian Socialist Conference still saw itself as the guardian of international peace, particularly when those who held power on the UN Security Council failed to live up to its ideals.

The following year saw the collapse of the democratic socialist vision in Indonesia and Burma and the beginnings of authoritarian rule. In 1957, Sukarno instituted his policy of ‘Guided Democracy’, undoing Sjahrir’s constitutional guarantees. He dissolved parliament and banned the liberal Islamic party Masjumi and the Indonesian Socialist Party in 1960. Privately, in a paper to his PSI colleagues, Sjahrir communicated his fears of violence and the emotional pull of ethnic-based regionalist movements as detrimental to the unity of Indonesian public life, and his ‘sickness’ at the military repression that followed.⁷⁸ In 1962, following rumours of a ‘PSI conspiracy’, Sjahrir was put under house arrest, along with other socialist intellectuals. In prison, Sjahrir buried himself in the literature of Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and Max Weber before suffering a stroke and losing his ability to speak and write.⁷⁹ After his death far from home, in a hospital in Geneva in 1966, Sjahrir’s body was returned to Indonesia and given a state funeral by Sukarno, once Sjahrir’s anti-colonial ally, still formally in office in the aftermath of the military coup that brought Suharto to power.

In Burma, after a decade of tensions, the AFPFL, led by U Nu, finally split apart in 1958. In the midst of economic distress and political fallout, Ne Win was asked to provide a ‘caretaker government’, as U Nu renounced his worldly possessions and temporarily resorted to the life of a Buddhist monk. During this time, Ne Win ruthlessly put down the disorder emerging in both the countryside and the city and arrested a number of political leaders from U Nu and U Ba Swe’s groups. The press published a letter where U Ba Swe openly consented to an extension of Ne Win’s term in office until elections could be held in 1960. U Nu’s party captured a majority, with U Ba Swe and U Kyaw

77 Dispatch from Embassy, New Delhi to Department of State, Washington DC, 26 December, 1956, RG 84 Burma: US Embassy General Records, 1953–1958, UD2186, NARA.

78 Sjahrir, ‘Peninjauan dan Pernilaian’ (1958), as quoted in Mrázek, *Sjahrir*, p. 453.

79 Mrázek, *Sjahrir*, pp. 473–80.

Nyein's faction losing miserably; members of the public believed they had become too close to the military. In 1962, Ne Win overthrew U Nu's democratically elected government and seized power. U Ba Swe was detained for a short while, and then released to live in retirement in Rangoon, passing away in 1987. U Kyaw Nyein, meanwhile, was detained by the military government for some years, and released only in January 1967. After years of cultivating a vision of the democratic socialist state both within Burma and across Asia, and professing a commitment to internationalism and allegiance to the UN Charter of human rights, Burmese socialists found themselves in a xenophobic prison, one at least partly of their own making.

Conclusion

In an article published soon after the 1954 Kalaw meeting, Edward Lawyone, editor of Rangoon's *Nation* newspaper and a cautious supporter of the ASC, suggested that socialists had not 'proved themselves revolutionary enough to capture the masses in a period of great political ferment in the area'. Where socialism grew well in the 'sheltered climate of advanced political democracy', he argued, it 'appears to lack the dynamism to cope with more violent political situations'.⁸⁰ Asian nations were coping with rapid political transitions against the backdrop of turbulent Cold War geopolitics. Domestic cleavages were exacerbated by responses to Cold War flashpoints, as the broad leftist coalitions born out of anti-colonial struggles split in two over the Korean War, Vietnam, and the continuing appeal of international communism. In Burma and Indonesia, this was fed by a propaganda war waged by American and Soviet intelligence officers.

Indonesian and Burmese socialists, active proponents of neutralism, were particularly vulnerable to the rise of military-backed authoritarian regimes. These regimes borrowed ideas from socialist intellectuals but abandoned the democratic values which they advocated so strongly. Whereas Burmese socialist intellectuals of the 1950s were keen to learn from the socialist, communist, and democratic countries, Ne Win – under the guise of a 'Burmese Way to Socialism' – closed off Burmese civil society from the outside world. The ascendancy of Suharto in a US-backed 1965 military coup decimated the Indonesian Communist Party, resulting in the mass killing of an estimated half a million Indonesians suspected of communist sympathies,

80 'Asian Socialists and Realism', *The Nation*, 26 May 1954.

and an erasure of the left in state-led narratives of Indonesian history. Some Indonesian socialists remained silent but fierce critics of the Suharto regime, while others were co-opted as modernizing technocrats.

In its early years, the ASC had provided a venue for some of the most thoughtful intellectuals in a region stretching from Cairo to Tokyo to come together for a momentary escape from the fractious realm of national politics. In spite of their differences, they devised a collective, humanist vision for post-colonial societies equitable to all men and women, regardless of religion or ethnicity, providing for the welfare of all. It had devoted itself to the cause of national liberation, seeking out information and personal connections about socialist parties and freedom movements throughout Asia and Africa. As they fought ideological and propaganda battles at home, delegates at the ASC remained committed to the idea that the model of democratic socialism would constitute a way out of the Cold War.

One political leader took on the ASC's legacy at the Young Asian Socialist Conference in Bombay in 1965. Lee Kuan Yew argued that this first generation of Asian socialists had been too preoccupied with democratic parliamentary practice and the welfare state.⁸¹ Democratic socialists in the Afro-Asian world required new solutions to problems of poverty and inequality, rooted in a ruthless commitment to productivity, economic planning, public service, and self-determination – ideals that moulded Singapore.⁸² Meanwhile, after the political defeat of this early generation, some socialist intellectuals joined the world of international technocracy, including Sujatmoko, who served temporarily in the UN alongside U Thant, third Secretary-General of the United Nations, and once political secretary to both U Nu and U Ba Swe. Legacies were also evident in civil society protests that flared up to contest authoritarian rule in Burma and Indonesia, in which the students and children of socialist intellectuals participated.⁸³ These national and internationalist ideals may have roots in these earlier visions of individual and political freedom, which stretched upwards from village to state, and across the Afro-Asian world.

81 Lee Kuan Yew, press conference selections, in *A Socialist Solution for Asia* (Singapore: Singapore Ministry of Culture, 1966), p. 24.

82 Lee Kuan Yew, 'A More Equal and Just Society for Asia', *ibid.*

83 Examples include the Malari incident in Indonesia, a student protest often blamed on socialist intellectuals, and the U Thant funeral crisis, in which U Ba Swe's daughters participated. U Kyaw Nyein's daughter Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein was active in the 1988 democracy movement.

Further Reading

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The Socialist International, 1951–, and the Progressive Alliance, 2013–

TALBOT IMLAY

In May 2013, delegates from over seventy political parties and other organizations gathered in Leipzig to found the Progressive Alliance as an alternative to the Socialist International (SI) created in 1951. Growing unhappiness with the membership of non-democratic and even authoritarian political parties in the SI provided a powerful spur to the new organization. The year before, Sigmar Gabriel, the chairman of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and a driving force behind the Progressive Alliance, had withheld his party's membership dues to the SI, insisting that he would not 'sit at the same table as criminals'.¹ Yet far more was at stake in the Progressive Alliance's creation than disputes over the Socialist International's membership. The emergence of the Progressive Alliance constituted a direct challenge to the SI's version of socialist internationalism, one dominated by party elites, rituals of solidarity, and backroom negotiations producing consensus and non-binding resolutions that were aspirational at best and not programmatic. Instead, the Progressive Alliance proposed an internationalism more in tune with twenty-first-century realities: a transnational network rather than a formal organization of national parties; grass-roots activism rather than elite politics; co-operation with progressives of various kinds rather than with socialists (or social democrats) alone; identification with an array of under-empowered and marginalized groups (women, visible minorities, LGBTIQ, for example) rather than simply wage earners; and an emphasis on gender, ecological, and socio-economic rights rather than political or workers' rights alone.

This chapter explores the history of the Socialist International, focusing on the forms of internationalism it embodied and practised. It is divided into four parts. The first part briefly also considers the origins of the SI as a successor to

¹ 'SPD will Sozialistischer Internationale den Geldhahn zudrehen und den Mitgliedsbeitrag nicht zahlen', *Der Spiegel*, 22 January 2012: available at www.spiegel.de/spiegel/vorab/a-810543.html.

the interwar Labour and Socialist International (LSI) and the pre-1914 Second International, as well as the organization's initial concentration on European issues. The second and third parts, covering the period from the 1950s to the 1980s or so, examine the SI's responses to a dual challenge: to enlarge membership in its European and Western core and to broaden its understanding of politics in the light of changing dynamics in the international as well as domestic political realms. The fourth part, covering the period since 1989, discusses the SI's seeming inability to adapt to newer political realities, an inability that fuelled criticism of the organization as out-of-touch as well as a search for alternative forms of internationalism. The final part considers briefly some of the strengths and weaknesses of the SI and the Progressive Alliance.

The SI's Origins and Early Years

Delegates from over thirty political parties gathered in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, in the summer of 1951 for the founding congress of the Socialist International. The event was the culmination of efforts, begun during the Second World War, to reconstitute both the International and socialist internationalism. That revamped forms of the two were necessary had become evident even before Nazi Germany's stunning military successes in 1940. On the eve of war in 1939, Friedrich Adler, the Austrian socialists' and the LSI's secretary, had circulated a memorandum deploring the fact that European socialists had never been more distant from the 'genuine spirit of internationalism'.² Adler's harsh assessment was understandable, for the 1930s had witnessed a marked decline in the practice of socialist internationalism, defined as a collective commitment of socialists and socialist parties to co-operate together on pressing international issues. Confronted with persistent economic crises as well as political turbulence at home, the leading socialist parties increasingly viewed socialism through a national prism. Revealingly, at the last LSI congress, organized in August 1933 to discuss the situation created by Nazi Germany's seizure of power and the destruction of the German SPD, a pillar of the pre-1914 and interwar Internationals, prominent delegates questioned the value of international socialist co-operation. '[E]ach of the Socialist parties', argued Hugh Dalton, a British Labour Party front-bencher, 'must judge of their own conditions in the light

2 H. Steiner, 'L'Internationale socialiste à la veille de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, juillet-août 1939. Documents de Friedrich Adler', *Le Mouvement social* 58 (1967), pp. 95-112 at p. 101.

of possibilities which present themselves in each country to promote Socialism and international peace'.³

Yet if socialist internationalism appeared moribund in 1939, the war provided a powerful impulse for renewal as European socialists, many in exile in Britain and others living in occupied or neutral countries, turned their attention to the future in anticipation of an Allied victory. Eager to place a socialist stamp on the post-war order within their separate nations but also between nations, they were convinced that success in this endeavour depended on the ability of socialists to constitute themselves as an international political force. In July 1944, Camille Huysmans, a leading Belgian socialist in exile in Britain, circulated a memorandum urging the British Labour Party to take steps to revitalize the International, insisting that 'the vital interests of the workers of all countries demand the speediest creation of an international organ of the Socialist movement'.⁴ As Huysmans knew as well as anyone, moreover, various European socialists had been meeting regularly in London during the war, even if the question of how to treat German and Austrian socialist exiles provoked considerable tensions.⁵ Responding to Huysmans' appeal, Labour officials convoked a conference of European socialists from Allied countries in March 1945, on the eve of Nazi Germany's defeat, in which the question of the International's future figured as the first item on the agenda. After three days of discussion, the delegates collectively expressed the desire to 'give new life to the Socialist International'.⁶

In the event, it would take six years to constitute a new International. Several reasons account for this delay. One reason stemmed from the considerable animosity towards German socialism, which had long been a cornerstone of socialist internationalism but was now blamed for insufficient opposition to the Nazis before 1933. But if German socialists were initially excluded from the international socialist fold, in 1947, the SPD was

3 *Protokoll. Internationale Konferenz der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale. Paris. Maison de la Mutualité, 21.–25. August 1933* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, 1976), p. 80.

4 Institut Emile Vandervelde, Brussels, Archives Camille Huysmans, F126/50, 'Proposals Concerning the Creation of an European Emergency Council of the Labour and Socialist International', July 1944.

5 See A. Glees, *Exile Politics during the Second World War: The German Social Democrats in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); W. Röder, *Die deutschen sozialistischen Exilgruppen in Großbritannien 1940–1945. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Widerstandes gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1973).

6 Office universitaire de recherche socialiste, Paris, Archives du PS-SFIO, carton: Conférences socialistes internationales, 1945–1948, 'La conférence internationale de Londres des 3, 4 et 5 mars 1945', undated, Vincent Auriol.

readmitted, partly due to the persistence of its post-war leader, Kurt Schumacher, who had spent most of the Nazi years in concentration camps and who, for all his fierce identity with the German people, could not imagine German socialism detached from a larger international socialist community. A second reason concerned the fate of socialist parties in eastern Europe operating under the looming shadow of Soviet dominance. Many west European socialists worried that a reconstituted International would force east European socialists to choose between social democracy and communism, a choice the latter sought desperately to avoid. By 1948, however, solidifying Cold War tensions discredited lingering hopes for some political accommodation between communists and socialists. As a result, the east European parties found themselves squeezed out of the budding world of international socialism, thereby removing an obstacle to consensus among west European socialists.⁷

A final reason for delay centred on the Labour Party's reservations. With Labour forming a majority government in Britain in the spring of 1945, party officials slowed the advance towards a reconstituted International, fearing that it might complicate the government's foreign policy. As an alternative, Labour proposed more informal forms of co-operation which, ironically, soon drew the party deeper into the practice of socialist internationalism, helping to normalize the latter while also fostering bonds of mutual expectation and obligation with foreign parties. Over time, moreover, the Labour government grew weaker, a political reality that shifted the balance of power in favour of party officials. By early 1951, these dynamics had combined to overcome hesitations, prodding Labour finally to endorse the creation of a new International.

The evident emphasis on compromise ensured that the Socialist International founded in 1951 resembled its predecessors, both the LSI and the pre-1914 Second International. It was a top-down organization, centred on party leaders and officials; it operated by consensus, with its resolutions non-binding on member parties; and its political predilections were resolutely reformist. Two additional characteristics are worth underscoring. First, like its predecessors, the SI was male-dominated. Reflecting the hold of the single male-breadwinner model of the family, European socialists in general believed in the existence of separate male and female spheres of activity. In international socialist politics, this belief manifested itself in the organization

⁷ See J. de Graaf, *Socialism across the Iron Curtain: Socialist Parties in East and West and the Reconstruction of Europe after 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); P. Heumos (ed.), *Europäischer Sozialismus im Kalten Krieg. Briefe und Berichte 1944–1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2004).

of a parallel structure in which socialist women from different parties and countries met to discuss typically female issues – housing, education, health, child care. Thus while the men met in Frankfurt in 1951 to herald the SI's birth, female socialists from seventeen countries held their own conference in the same city.⁸ This structure continues today as the 'Socialist International Women', which is affiliated to the SI. From the beginning, the SI was also Euro-centric in its makeup, dominated by its European members and especially the British, French, and German parties. Many of its non-European members came from the British Commonwealth, particularly the 'white' Dominions. As we shall see, awareness of this bias prompted efforts on the part of European socialists to expand the International.

Its limits notwithstanding, the SI's principal purpose was to foster the practice of internationalism – the voluntary, regular, and sustained co-operation between socialist parties on international issues. The goals were both visionary and practical: to demonstrate that socialism could conceive of an alternative model of international relations to the 'power politics'-oriented one seemingly favoured by most states; and to forge common 'socialist' positions on specific issues that parties could then promote in their parliaments and legislatures at home. At times, this practice worked smoothly, resulting in consensus, but at other times it generated tensions and frustration as socialists accused each other of ignoring, undermining, and even betraying socialist internationalism.

Reflecting its geographical makeup, the SI devoted considerable attention to Europe during the first ten to fifteen years of its existence. From the beginning, European socialists were understandably preoccupied with the continent's place in the Cold War. Socialists had emerged from their bruising civil war with the Bolsheviks during and immediately after the First World War deeply suspicious of communism – an antipathy the Third International, founded in 1919, fully reciprocated. That the SI would align itself with the American-led Cold War camp was thus all but inevitable. 'American policy may have its weaknesses and its blind spots', Morgan Philips, the SI's first secretary, affirmed at its founding congress, but 'we should be guilty of a criminal myopia if we did not recognize that the policy of the present American Administration shows a degree of enlightened and progressive unselfishness which few countries with comparable power have ever displayed.'⁹

8 Arbeiterbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek, Oslo, Det Norske Arbeiderparti, D Db 1951, 'Bericht über die Internationale sozialistische Frauenkonferenz in Frankfurt/M am 27./28. Juni 1951'.

9 International Institute of Social History (IISH), *Socialist International Information* 1, 27/28 (1951), p. 15.



Fig. 15.1 Three members of the executive committee of the newly reconstituted Socialist International, 1953: from left to right, Julius Braunthal, Erich Ollenhauer, and Morgan Phillips. In the background are members of the socialist youth organization Die Falken (The Falcons) with the International's new banner. (Photograph by Ullstein Bild/Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

At the same time, Philips' position did not go uncontested. Indeed, the SI not only served as a forum for sometimes heated debates on socialism's Cold War stance, but also allowed dissident socialists from one party to forge cross-party alliances that they could mobilize to contest party leaderships at home. Throughout the 1950s, for example, the French socialist Marceau Pivert repeatedly pointed to the support he received from foreign socialists in his crusade to push the French Socialist Party (SFIO) to embrace a more balanced stance – what he and other socialists presented as a 'Third Way' – between the American and Soviet blocs. In effect, Pivert insisted that this Third Way, what he called an 'autonomous' policy, embodied socialist internationalism. Writing to a confidant in April 1950, Pivert contended that the 'doctrinal position that needs to be restored is that of international socialism, that is to say, essentially that of an autonomous policy for socialism in terms of national politics'.¹⁰

¹⁰ Archives nationales, Paris (AN), Papiers Edouard Depreux, 465/AP/5-4, Pivert to Depreux, 13 April 1950.

Although the appeal of a Third Way resonated within various European socialist parties, unease with the SI's pro-American Cold War alignment expressed itself most tangibly in conceptual efforts to overcome Europe's divisions. The most publicized of these efforts consisted of calls to demilitarize parts of the continent. Several notable non-socialist figures had floated such an idea during the 1950s, including George Kennan and Adam Rapacki, the Polish foreign minister. But it was German socialists who embraced the idea most enthusiastically, eventually publishing in 1959 a 'Germany plan' that envisaged a 'détente zone' comprising the two Germanies and several east European countries. The zone would be subject to an arms limitations agreement, guaranteed by the Americans and Soviets, which prevented member states from possessing nuclear weapons and from belonging to either military alliance. For SPD leaders, the plan offered a framework for Germany's reunification in the medium term, and, in the short term, a means to distinguish their party's foreign policy from the government's.

To lend weight to its campaign, the SPD sought to mobilize the SI behind the 'Germany plan', persuading the organization to create a small committee in February 1959 on 'European security and the German problem' to discuss various proposals.¹¹ Although the French and Dutch committee members balked at endorsing the 'Germany plan', the SPD did find an ally in the Labour Party leader, Hugh Gaitskell, who desperately sought to distract attention from a polarizing debate within his party over Britain's possession and testing of nuclear weapons. Gaitskell, in fact, had earlier outlined his own plan for a 'neutral zone' in central and eastern Europe as the best way to overcome Cold War divisions. Much like the SPD, he envisioned a 'multilateral European security plan, in which the various states in the neutral zone would have their territories guaranteed by the Great Powers as well as by each other'. Tellingly, Gaitskell speculated that such a plan could form 'part of a wider move towards a comprehensive disarmament agreement between the great powers'.¹² In the end, such proposals went nowhere, principally because neither Washington nor Moscow manifested any real interest. Nevertheless, their sustained discussion within the SI suggests the vibrancy of socialist internationalism as well as the intertwining of the international and national spheres in its practice.

11 Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv, Zürich, Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz, Ar.1.260.34, 'Procès-verbal de la réunion du Bureau de l'Internationale socialiste, Londres, le 23 avril 1959', SI circular, No. 18/59, 1 May 1959.

12 H. Gaitskell, *The Challenge of Co-Existence* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 56–8.

If the SI grappled with the question of Europe's place in the Cold War, the issue of European unity attracted still more attention. There had been some talk within the LSI of a united Europe during the interwar period, but it was the experience of a second major European war that convinced many socialists (and non-socialists) that the project had become a pressing one. The challenge was to agree on what European unity meant – or on what type of Europe was desired. And here the Schuman Plan in 1950, which proposed an integration of the west European steel and coal industries, proved decisive for several reasons. One reason concerned Britain. The Labour government's refusal to participate in the Schuman Plan ensured that European unity would initially proceed without Britain, complicating efforts at co-operation between Labour and the continental socialist parties as well as among the latter. For example, Guy Mollet, the French socialist leader, feared that without British participation (with its influential Labour Party) not only would the continent be dominated by Germany but hopes for a socialist Europe would be still-born. Mollet and others, accordingly, used the SI forum as a means to involve Labourites in socialist deliberations within the SI on European unity, hoping in the process to attenuate Labour's opposition. This long-term strategy, moreover, enjoyed some success as witnessed by Labour's evolution under Harold Wilson in the early 1960s from opposition to support of Britain's entry into a united Europe. Significantly, Wilson had been a frequent participant in SI discussions on Europe during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Well before then, however, the Schuman Plan had placed the question of Europe's economic configuration at the centre of socialist discussions, even if political and geo-strategic considerations were never absent. Indeed, under Schumacher the SPD rejected the Schuman Plan as anti-German, a position that stoked tensions with the SFIO in particular. Yet even when SPD–SFIO relations were at their nadir, the practice of socialist internationalism continued to function. German and French socialists, a prominent SPD official reported, continued to meet 'in a climate of factual willingness to accept and examine objections, concerns, and arguments'.¹³ More to the point, French, German, and other socialists managed to work out a common position on Europe: support for an integrated Europe but not for one limited to the economic realm. Instead of a liberal economic project, encapsulated in the construction of a common market, the SI called for a 'social' Europe

13 H. Wehner, 'Europäische Sozialisten zum Schumanplan', *Geist und Tat* 10 (1951), pp. 313–15.

encompassing supranational institutions capable of advancing the construction of socialism within and between member states. As André Philip, a French socialist and prominent pro-European, asserted in a 1956 speech, the scope of a united Europe must extend well beyond the ‘simple liberal methods of eliminating tariff barriers or liberating exchanges’.¹⁴

In the light of this consensus, it is not surprising that European socialists greeted the Rome treaties with some doubts. In discussions within the SI, several participants admitted that the projected common market did not correspond to a socialist Europe. Yet, this admission notwithstanding, the socialist parties from the EEC’s six countries endorsed the treaties, helping to ensure their ratification by national legislatures. In opting for endorsement, the European socialist parties agreed that a united Europe must take priority over a socialist Europe. Indeed, they framed the first goal as a precondition for the second. The task of socialists was now defined as ensuring that a socialist Europe emerged from a united one. As the German socialist Fritz Erler explained in a report to the International, the Rome treaties,

[are] a starting point for progress, if we succeed in developing on the basis of this treaty a healthy social, financial and economic policy. That is the task of Socialists. The European Community will only be healthy if the Socialists are strong. Our strength will determine whether the whole undertaking will turn out to be good or bad.¹⁵

That European socialists had never determined clearly what they meant by a socialist Europe undoubtedly helped to convince them that one could be built. In time, some European socialists would question this conviction as the common market developed and as the welfare state came under attack in various member states. Yet if the confidence of Erler and his fellow socialists might appear misplaced from today’s vantage point, it is a testimony to their collective confidence in the practice of socialist internationalism – a confidence founded on their shared experience of co-operation since 1945 regarding Europe’s future.

Efforts to Enlarge the SI Geographically

Although the question of Europe’s future dominated the Socialist International’s deliberations in the early years, European socialists also considered the larger

¹⁴ AN, Papiers André Philip, 625/AP/12, untitled speech, 23 March 1956.

¹⁵ IISH, SI, 87, ‘Report of the Fifth Congress of the Socialist International . . . 2–6 July, 1957’, circular 70/57, Erler, pp. 96–7.

world. Indeed, from early on they worried that the new organization would be seen as ‘merely a “Western” or “white” International’ if membership were limited to Western countries.¹⁶ In a period of accelerating decolonization and, more generally, of what appeared to be the globalization of international politics, it was imperative for the SI to expand beyond its European/Western core if socialism were to remain pertinent. European socialists believed that the future of socialism was increasingly intertwined with political developments on other continents: socialism could not thrive if limited to Europe alone, but without a thriving socialism the non-European world would be compelled to choose between Soviet-dominated communism and American-inspired capitalism, ultimately to socialism’s cost. Morgan Phillips defined the stakes precisely in these terms at the SI’s second congress in Milan in 1952. Socialists need to build a ‘worldwide Socialist International’, he intoned, in order to ‘demonstrate that it offers the people of the world the only alternative and a better alternative, to the capitalist system which is in decline and the new totalitarianisms which are old-fashioned despotism in modern dress’.¹⁷

Initially, the SI directed its attention towards Asia. In a series of meetings in 1952, Burmese, Indian, Indonesian, and Japanese socialists laid the foundation for what became the Asian Socialist Congress (ASC) founded in Rangoon in January 1953.¹⁸ Seeing an opportunity, the SI sent a high-level delegation to Rangoon led by Clement Attlee, the Labour leader and former British prime minister, to offer the ASC a merger. Although Asian socialists rejected the offer, European socialists were undeterred. Indeed, in the wake of the Rangoon conference the SI set out to woo the ASC, mounting a campaign to strengthen ties between the two organizations. Among the measures adopted was a joint publishing venture as well as an Asian Fund to promote and finance exchanges between European and Asian socialists. Accordingly, during the 1950s Asian socialists regularly attended various meetings of the SI, while European socialists accepted invitations to visit Asian countries. For European socialists, the goal of all this activity remained the creation of a globe-spanning International. Writing in the Indian socialist newspaper *Janata* in 1955, Julius Braunthal, the SI’s secretary, maintained that an

16 National Museum of Labour History, Manchester (NMLH), Labour Party Archive (LPA), International Sub-Committee, 1952 file, ‘The Socialist International (Memorandum to the Bureau of the Socialist International on the Work and Functions of the Socialist International)’, Morgan Phillips, undated.

17 IISH, *Socialist International Information*, vol. 11, 1952, ‘The Second Congress of the Socialist International, Milan, 17–21 October 1951’, Phillips, pp. 2–4.

18 On the Asian Socialist Congress, see Su Lin Lewis, Chapter 14, this volume.

International was viable ‘only if Socialism in East and West merge in a common organization’.¹⁹

The SI’s courtship of the ASC, however, encountered several difficulties. One involved anti-colonialism. Many Asian socialists possessed first-hand experience of colonial rule, as their countries had earlier been incorporated into empires or menaced by imperial powers. That the ASC would adopt an uncompromising anti-colonial position was thus a forgone conclusion. More pertinently, Asian socialists framed their anti-colonialism partly in opposition to the SI, which they accused of being lukewarm on the issue. Numerous European socialists, in fact, hesitated to endorse the ASC’s position, invoking the dangers presumably stemming from overly hasty transfers of power from imperial to post-colonial authorities. In particular, European socialists worried about the protection of minority rights in what were multi-ethnic or, in the language of the time, ‘multi-racial’ societies. Instead of independence, European socialists initially offered development. At its 1952 conference, the SI approved a ‘World Plan for Mutual Aid’ that outlined an ambitious programme of development organized on global, regional, and bilateral bases. In presenting the plan, the Dutch socialist Hendrik Vos claimed that European socialists must ‘persuade our own people that it is our duty to provide the underdeveloped countries with the means to satisfy the direct needs and to reach full development in the future’.²⁰ During the 1950s the SI became a vocal supporter of development aid.

But however much they might welcome development, Asian socialists refused to view it as a substitute for support for independence for all colonies. When European socialists pointed to the risks of majority tyranny, their Asian counterparts accused them of wishing to perpetuate colonialism. Matters came to a head with the Algerian War, in which a European settler minority, backed by France, resisted the demands of Algerian nationalists who claimed to represent the Arabic-speaking Muslim majority. With minority rights increasingly equated with white minority rule and with the perpetuation of colonialism, European socialists found themselves in an untenable position. By the end of the decade, the SI had rallied to the ASC’s position of immediate and unconditional national independence for the colonial world in general, thereby abandoning its defence of minority rights.²¹ By then, however, much ill-will had been generated.

19 J. Braunthal, ‘The need for a Universal International’, *Janata*, 30 January 1955, pp. 4–5.

20 IISH, *Socialist International Information*, SII, ‘The Second Congress of the Socialist International – II. Milan, 17–21 October 1952’, 8 November 1952, Vos, pp. 2–11.

21 T. C. Imlay, ‘International socialism and decolonization during the 1950s: competing rights and the postcolonial order’, *American Historical Review* 118, 4 (2013), pp. 1105–32.

If the issue of anti-colonialism hampered the SI's courtship of the ASC, a narrow understanding of socialist internationalism presented another and perhaps more fundamental problem. To recall, the internationalism of European socialists centred on hierarchically organized and independent political parties firmly anchored in national political contexts, which co-operated with one another in formal institutions according to well-established rules and procedures. Asian socialism poorly fitted this mould, with parties often tiny, dominated by urban elites, prey to schisms, and possessing fluid boundaries between socialist and non-socialist groupings. When European socialists scanned the political landscape of Asian socialism they saw little that was familiar and interpreted this unfamiliarity as infirmity and even chaos. This interpretation both reflected and reinforced an ill-concealed paternalism on the part of European socialists, who judged their Asian counterparts to be in need of guidance. Underpinning this paternalism was the assumption that the SI would globalize by diffusing its model of socialist internationalism. Significantly, the majority of European socialists opposed proposals to alter the SI's functioning to take into account different regional groupings. That European socialists themselves possessed a strong regional identity, one that the project of European unity would strengthen, was a point few of them appeared willing to consider.

In their efforts to enlarge the SI, European socialists would have more success in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. A driving force in these efforts was Willy Brandt, who served as the International's president from 1976 to 1992. Having been driven from the West German chancellorship in 1974 by a spy scandal, Brandt needed an outlet for his restless energy, and with German politics now closed, the international realm beckoned. Brandt's ambitions, moreover, were considerable: not simply to overcome Cold War divisions in Europe but also to re-orientate international politics away from the East–West superpower axis and towards a North–South one. Few Western political figures were more attuned than Brandt to what many observers at the time viewed (and some feared) as the emergence of the Global South as an international actor. From within the United Nations, where member states from the south formed the Group of 77, representing a majority in the General Assembly, came calls for a new international political and economic order – one that would better reflect the interests of the world's poorer and less developed regions.

Convinced that socialism must respond to these major developments in global geopolitics, Brandt strove to transform the SI into an instrument of his global vision. Indeed, he made a socialist 'offensive' in the 'Third World'

a condition of his accepting the SI's presidency. That said, Brandt was largely preaching to the converted as European socialists generally agreed that, now more than ever, the SI must escape its Eurocentric bounds. As the international secretary of the Austrian party affirmed at the time, 'European socialists perceive and recognize [their] world-wide obligations.'²² As the SI's president, Brandt could draw on multiple resources for his Third World offensive. As a popular and telegenic former German chancellor, he exuded a star power that reached well beyond socialist circles; no less pertinently, he possessed a vast network of friends and contacts. And as SPD chairman until 1987, Brandt could mobilize the assets of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the party's relatively well-financed think tank and political organization, which was active in several regions of the world.

No less importantly, in Latin America in general the SI found willing partners. As Brandt understood, a variety of socialist and left-leaning politicians in the region eagerly sought allies abroad in order to increase their international profile but also as a counterweight to American dominance. Economic motives also played a role, as Latin American leaders hoped to strengthen commercial ties with Europe and especially with West Germany, led at the time by an SPD government. Somewhat ironically, American officials also welcomed a more active policy on the SI's part in Latin America, hoping it could exert a moderating influence on leftist movements.

Wasting little time, the SI helped to organize a two-day conference in Caracas in May 1976 that brought together delegates from thirteen European socialist parties and fifteen Latin American parties. Influenced by their earlier experience with Asian socialists, the European delegates emphasized flexibility: co-operation would remain informal, centred more on networks and leading personalities than on official inter-party relations. Similarly, they eschewed any political litmus test regarding socialism, particularly in terms of anti-communism: unlike with European socialist parties, the Latin Americans were not asked to break with communism. Following the Caracas meeting, the SI moved quickly to translate its assurances into policy. Its congress in November 1976 sketched out a position designed to appeal to the Latin American left in general: in addition to denouncing military dictatorship and calling on member parties to use their influence to press

22 B. Rother, 'Sozialdemokratie global. Willy Brandt und die Sozialistische Internationale in Lateinamerika', unpublished manuscript, pp. 36, 79. I am grateful to Dr Rother for allowing me to consult the manuscript. The following paragraphs draw heavily from Rother's study as well as from F. Pedrosa, *La otra izquierda. La socialdemocracia en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2012).

the United States to reconsider its support of the latter, a lengthy resolution devoted entirely to Latin America committed the SI to promote a 'new economic order' that encompassed 'a radical redistribution of wealth' as well as the 'recognition of human rights'. Similarly, its new statutes announced the aim of pursuing relations with all 'socialist oriented' parties and movements. Soon afterwards, the SI began organizing encounters with an array of Latin American political actors – trade unions, social movements, political parties, NGOs, co-operatives, etc.²³ Two years later, the SI created a Latin American committee – a sign of its willingness to reform the organization's functioning to take account of different regional realities among socialists.

The SI's offensive enjoyed some success. During the course of Brandt's presidency, the number of Latin American and Caribbean member parties rose to seventeen. More generally, by the early 1990s European parties counted for only one-third of the SI's members, down from three-fifths in 1976. The SI, it appears, had finally overcome its Eurocentrism. At the same time, the experience in Latin America created tensions. Among European socialists, the French challenged Brandt and the SPD's pre-eminence as well as the emphasis on Latin America. Not only were French socialists more interested in the francophone world and especially in Africa, but they also expressed unease with Brandt's flexibility, insisting on the need for a more doctrinaire approach to socialism. For European socialists more generally, Latin American politics proved to be fraught with complexities, raising a myriad of contentious issues – the validity in some circumstances of one-party rule or of political violence; the acceptable scope of radical social and economic transformation; or the wisdom of alienating Washington. These issues were far from abstract. Whether with Castro's regime in Cuba, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, or leftist political parties in El Salvador, European socialists struggled to identify a socialist third way not so much between Washington and Moscow as between democracy and revolution, between meaningful reform and radical upheaval.²⁴

If only because of the deep-seated inequalities within Latin American societies, such a third way was always bound to be elusive. Yet the SI's difficulties in the region also reflected a lingering Eurocentrism. At the

23 'Neue Satzung der Sozialistischen Internationale vom 13. SI-Kongreß in Genf, 26.–28. November 1976', and 'Resolutionen des 13. SI-Kongresses, 28. November 1976', both reproduced in E. Mujla-León and A.-S. Nilsson (eds.), *Die Sozialistische Internationale in den 80er Jahren. Dritte-Welt-Politik zwischen den Blöcken* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1995), pp. 206–19.

24 For an insightful discussion of these problems, see B. Rother, 'Die SPD und El Salvador 1979 bis 1985', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 66, 4 (2018), pp. 645–83.

national level, the third way the SI sought amounted to a version of what Michael Mann calls the ‘normal lib–lab welfare state’, a compromise between various political forces that had emerged in Europe over several decades and in response to two devastating wars.²⁵ That Latin American politics could follow a similar trajectory, in a Cold War conflict featuring the United States as a regional hegemon hyper-allergic to almost any form of political leftism, was highly questionable. European socialists might champion a third way, but in an increasingly polarized political context their version implied a closer affiliation with the Cold War American-led camp than many Latin American leftists were comfortable with.

But the problem was not simply that European socialists viewed a third way through a west European prism. They also found it difficult to abandon their model of internationalism. As Bernd Rother notes, the SI remained an ‘alliance of European parties’: Latin American parties were invited to join an existing organization with its established ‘norms, rituals, and shared experiences’, which meant that the burden of adaptation fell principally on them. Relations between the SI and the non-European regions thus remained ‘asymmetric’.²⁶ For all their emphasis on flexibility, European socialists continued to view the International’s expansion in terms of the diffusion of their particular model of socialist internationalism. Brandt himself unwittingly underscored this point in a speech at the SI’s 1976 congress in which he rooted socialist internationalism in a ‘tradition’ and a ‘sense of shared bonds’ going back to Karl Marx’s First International and running through its successors.²⁷ While this common heritage might unite European socialists, it was not one shared by non-European socialists. Throughout the 1950s, Asian socialists had debated the pertinence of European socialism, disagreeing on whether Asian socialism constituted a regional version of a larger phenomenon or something *sui generis*. But even for the Latin American left, the invocation of a common heritage embodied in the successive Internationals had little resonance. After all, only one party from Latin America (the socialist group of Buenos Aires) had been present at the Second International’s founding congress in Paris in 1889; and Latin Americans were completely absent from the LSI’s founding congress in Hamburg in 1923.

25 M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. III, *Global Empires and Revolution, 1890–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 241.

26 Rother, *Sozialdemokratie global*, p. 153.

27 ‘Ansprache von Willy Brandt, Vorsitzender der Sozialistischen Internationale, auf dem 13. SI-Kongreß in Genf, 26. November 1976’, reproduced in Mujla-León and Nilsson (eds.), *Die Sozialistische Internationale in den 80er Jahren*, pp. 219–27.

The SI and International Politics from the 1960s

In addition to the need to expand beyond its European/Western core, the Socialist International faced the challenge of adapting to changes in international politics beginning in the 1960s. The rise of the Global South has already been mentioned, but these changes also included the emergence of a variety of movements (anti-nuclear, environmental, human rights, gender equality, anti-poverty), many of which operated on a transnational basis and offered a more grassroots-, youth-, and militant-centred, and less male-dominated approach to politics than did the more traditional political parties, among them the socialists. If this alternative approach to politics is often associated with the turbulence of the late 1960s, its influence would be felt on national and international politics long afterwards.

From the vantage point of 1989 it seemed that the Socialist International adapted well to these changes. In June of that year the SI updated its declaration of principles issued at its founding congress in 1951. The declaration situated international socialism between communism, which emphasized equality and solidarity at the expense of freedom, and liberalism and conservatism, which privileged the reverse. Such a positioning might seem ironic given that Gorbachev's reforms had already placed communism's future in grave doubt, but the declaration's overall vision offered a potential alternative to the neoliberal models that were gaining political momentum. The declaration thus insisted not only on the importance of human rights and global peace, but also on environmental protection, solidarity between North and South, sustainable economic growth, social control of technology, and equality between all groups and especially between men and women. The means to pursue this expansive agenda was democracy at the national and international level. In an echo of Brandt's famous call in 1969 as the newly appointed West German chancellor to 'dare more democracy', the SI insisted that '[p]olitical democracy, for socialists, is the necessary framework and precondition for other rights and liberties'. For the SI, accordingly, the 'challenge is nothing less than the beginning of a new, democratic world society'.²⁸

By the time Brandt became its president, however, it was questionable whether the SI constituted a viable vehicle for the promotion of such an agenda. To promote the latter, the SI's member parties would need to cooperate closely. Yet as early as the 1960s the practice of socialist internationalism appeared to be in decline. Emerging from the war, the

²⁸ See www.socialistinternational.org/about-us/declaration-of-principles.

regular co-operation between socialist parties on concrete issues had flourished under the SI's aegis with party officials (often working in their party's international department or bureau) responsible for maintaining inter-party relations. If this lent socialist internationalism a formal and even bureaucratic aspect, it underscored the SI's relevance as the dominant context for these relations. Just as importantly, it helped to root the practice of socialist internationalism within each party, at least among the leadership cadres.

Beginning in the 1960s, the SI became less relevant to the major parties as each one increasingly pursued its own international policy, eschewing co-operation with other parties in forging positions on issues. Paradoxically, the very practice of socialist internationalism arguably undermined the shared commitment to its continuation. The extended experience of consulting and negotiating with other parties on a range of difficult post-war issues – European integration, international security, decolonization – worked over time to sensitize socialists to differences in perspective and thus also in interests between parties – perspectives and interests that reflected different national political contexts. This process of sensitization, in turn, worked to anchor socialist parties more solidly in domestic politics. Increasingly, when a socialist party forged positions on international issues, its principal interlocutors were domestic political allies and rivals rather than foreign socialist parties. The point is not that socialist parties lost interest in international politics but rather that the practice of socialist internationalism became nationalized.²⁹

To be sure, European integration created something of an exception, as socialist parties from the participating states collaborated with one another in European institutions. That said and notwithstanding initial hopes, European socialist parties rarely functioned as a cohesive group. The co-operation that did occur often focused on narrow, technical issues. Commenting on a meeting of socialist members of the European Community's assembly in 1977, Roy Jenkins, a prominent pro-European Labour politician, grumbled that the participants 'are not an inspiring group and most of the conversation was about some incredibly detailed, pointless, and trivial matters between the Commission and Parliament'.³⁰ Needless to say, the partial shift of locus to European institutions did nothing to increase the SI's relevance, not least to the larger, non-European world. In the end, the Europeanization of the

29 This argument is developed in T. C. Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

30 R. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 14 June 1977, p. 117. Also see S. Hix and U. Lesse, *Shaping a Vision: A History of the Party of European Socialists, 1957–2002* (Brussels: Parti Socialiste Européen, 2002).

practice of socialist internationalism proved to be a poor substitute for the more extensive practice that had developed under the SI's aegis.

Contributing to this process of nationalization was the remodelling of European socialist parties from class-oriented organizations to mass popular parties geared to winning majorities in national elections. The SPD constituted the classic case with the adoption in 1959 of its Bad Godesberg programme, designed to configure a new identity for the party, one rooted less in Marxist societal transformation and more in progressive reform. Implicitly or explicitly, other socialist parties followed a similar path. At the time, this remodelling of socialist parties attracted critics who warned that it meant surrendering socialism's promise of a more just, fair, and equitable society. Over time, the seeming inability of socialism to present a credible alternative to the neoliberal projects for remaking society beginning in the 1970s would sharpen the criticism. But here the more pertinent point is that the remodelling of socialist parties into reformist-oriented electoral vehicles rooted them even more firmly in national politics.

Somewhat ironically, many socialists hoped that Brandt, whose rise to leadership of the SPD coincided with the party's remodelling, would re-energize the practice of socialist internationalism as SI president. The results, however, were ambiguous. The former West German chancellor's star quality certainly boosted the SI's profile, making it more newsworthy and probably also more influential as an international actor. At the same time, there were problematic aspects to Brandt's tenure. Although Brandt had been a committed socialist from his early years, his activities during the 1970s and 1980s extended well beyond the world of international socialism. Only one year after his election as SI president, Brandt agreed to chair the Independent Commission for International Issues (better known as the North-South Commission) established by World Bank president Robert McNamara. The Commission's report (the Brandt Report), ready in 1980, recommended measures by the developed and industrial world to better integrate underdeveloped countries into the global economy. Other activities outside the SI included high-level talks with various world leaders as well as attempts to resolve pressing international crises, for example, the plight of Palestinians and that of hostages in Iraq. Although these efforts did not necessarily contradict the SI's general policy lines, they not only took Brandt away from his duties as president, but also risked overshadowing the SI as a distinct organization.

This risk is noteworthy because Brandt, however unwittingly, strengthened the ongoing process in which the practice of socialist internationalism grew detached from the SI. One way he did so was through an individual,

personality-driven politics. A good example is the socialist triumvirate he formed with the Austrian Bruno Kreisky and the Swede Olof Palme, which roamed widely over issues and, more importantly, operated largely outside the confines of their parties – or of the SI. Much the same can be said of François Mitterrand, the French socialist leader from 1971 who, before becoming France's president in 1981, often pursued his own personal socialist diplomacy in the non-European world.³¹ Socialist internationalism, in short, was becoming highly personal and personalized. This development also manifested itself in the growing recourse to networks and informal contacts over the more formal inter-party negotiations that characterized the SI in its early years. Brandt, in particular, liked to operate through networks, exploiting his celebrity, charisma, and contacts. And as Brandt would doubtlessly have argued, networks and informal relations have their uses. Yet their lack of rootedness in political structures – such as socialist parties grouped together in the International – arguably made them less binding on participants. Such networks and relations, in any case, did little to re-anchor the practice of socialist internationalism within and between the SI's member parties.

Without a vibrant practice of internationalism, the SI risked becoming an empty shell. More to the point, it is hard to see how socialism, as an international movement, could translate the SI's Declaration of Principles into something more tangible – into a common political programme. This is significant because many of the issues enumerated in the Declaration were trans-border in nature and thus required an international response. One of the SI's principal purposes, it is worth recalling, was to facilitate precisely such a response among socialists. After all, the practice of socialist internationalism, defined as the extended process of consultation and negotiation between parties, aimed to forge common 'socialist' positions on pressing international issues.

To be sure, the practice of socialist internationalism under the SI's aegis could be difficult and, in the long term, even counterproductive. But during its heyday this practice produced noteworthy benefits. First and foremost, it prodded socialists to widen their horizons beyond the national context. In working with their counterparts from other countries and sometimes (albeit more rarely) from other continents, the practice of internationalism compelled socialists to consider other positions and perspectives. Many French socialists did not approach the issue of European security in the same way as did German socialists, who represented a divided nation. Similarly, for Asian

31 See W. Brandt, B. Kreisky, and O. Palme, *La Social-démocratie et l'avenir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); J. Bonnin, *Les voyages de François Mitterrand. Le PS et le monde (1971–1981)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014).

socialists national self-determination was a more pressing issue than it was for many European socialists. This interaction helped, for a time at least, to limit the strong pull of national politics and national perspectives on socialists. Another noteworthy (and already mentioned) benefit of the practice of socialist internationalism was the platform it provided for dissidents within a party. Often at most a minority within their own parties, dissidents could look to the International for much needed moral support and even political allies. In militating for a firmer position by Labour in opposition to nuclear weapons during the 1950s, for example, Aneurin Bevan pointed to backing within the International to press his case. If the practice of internationalism breathed life into the SI, the SI also contributed to a vibrant practice of socialist internationalism.

The problem, then, was not with the SI's 1989 Declaration of Principles, which might have provided a guideline for a renewed socialist internationalism. Rather, it was with the SI: the decline of the practice of socialist internationalism within the International made it an unsatisfactory vehicle for translating principles into a policy programme. This latter task reverted to individual socialist parties operating largely independently of other socialist parties. The result for the SI was to exacerbate existing problems. Increasingly devoid of political substance, the practice of internationalism within the SI became ritualistic, the calendar of regular gatherings and the insistence on procedure and formalities masking poorly the organization's growing irrelevance. Worse still, this fossilized practice of internationalism became an obstacle to change. As the SI's political pertinence waned, the existing rules and procedures grew in importance as the sole binding tie between member parties. At the same time, the SI's form of internationalism – its top-down, party-centred, and formal nature – appeared increasingly out of step with developments since the 1960s. As socialist parties became mass electoral vehicles, the locus of reform and contestational politics shifted towards movements whose grassroots basis, less formalized structures, and tendency to concentrate on single issues seemed more relevant than political parties. If socialist parties found themselves bypassed by this development, the SI also risked falling further into irrelevance as many of these movements were transnational in their ambitions and activities.

The SI and the Progressive Alliance

In the end, what is perhaps surprising is not so much that the Progressive Alliance emerged to challenge the Socialist International, but that such

a challenge did not come sooner (Tables 15.1 and 15.2). The limits of the SI's practice of internationalism had been evident for some time and critics were not lacking. In this sense, the Progressive Alliance can be seen as a response to a need for renewal – a renewal not only of socialist or social democratic parties but also of the practice of socialist internationalism. The SI's version of the latter, inherited from the pre-1914 and interwar Internationals, had arguably

Table 15.1 Member parties of the Socialist International

	Number of parties	
	1951	2020
Europe	23	27
Africa	0	19
Asia	3	15
Americas	5	17
Other	1	3

Note: Middle Eastern parties are grouped under Asia.

Sources: IISH, Socialist International Information, 1 (1951), 36–7; www.socialistinternational.org/about-us/members; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Alliance.

Table 15.2 Participating and member parties of the Progressive Alliance

	Number of parties	
	2013	2020
Europe	32	37
Africa	16	27
Asia	17	28
Americas	7	16
Other	2	4

Note: Middle Eastern parties are grouped under Asia.

Sources: IISH, Socialist International Information, 1 (1951), 36–7; www.socialistinternational.org/about-us/members; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Alliance.

outlived its usefulness. As modes of politics evolved in the national and international domains, the SI, like many of its member parties, found it difficult to adapt. This difficulty, it is worth underlining, was not in the realm of principles. The SI's 1989 Declaration is admirable in many ways in its vision of a peaceful, just, and equitable society for all both within nations as well as between them. Rather, the difficulty lay in translating principles into a programme that socialist parties could collectively promote. Without a vibrant practice of internationalism among parties, the SI's Declaration remained bloodless, drained of the politics that might breathe life into it.

From this perspective, the Progressive Alliance does appear to be a more appropriate vehicle. Its more networked and grassroots-oriented, less formal and party-based practice of internationalism offers a fruitful alternative to the SI's version which, as the SPD's Sigmar Gabriel archly remarked in 2011, had 'petrified in formalities and possessed no attractive force'.³² It also appears to be an attractive alternative: the Progressive Alliance has doubled its membership from 70 political parties and organizations in 2013 to some 140 today. As a laboratory of politics, moreover, the Progressive Alliance has been active, encouraging exchanges among an array of political actors in different countries and regions regarding the nature, contents, and forms of progressive political activism. Not surprisingly, the Progressive Alliance implicitly defines this practice of internationalism in opposition to the SI's. As its most recent Agenda announces:

We rely on the strengths of a civil society based on solidarity. With the creative impetus of democratic politics, we want to strengthen cohesion in our countries and promote a sense of belonging and feeling at home . . .

Our cooperation is not based on instructions or unrealistic majority decisions; it is being developed through ideas and moral inspiration, and not least driven by the search for common solutions.³³

As this chapter has indicated, there is much to criticize in the SI's practice of socialist internationalism. And perhaps it is true, as two political scientists have argued, that the involvement of socialist parties in national electoral politics inexorably undermines socialist aspirations for transformation at home and abroad.³⁴ Yet in functioning democracies political parties remain

32 'Sozialdemokraten gründen neue Internationale', available at www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/807483.sozialdemokraten-gruenden-neue-internationale.html.

33 Progressive Alliance, 'Agenda', 15 November 2019, available at <https://progressive-alliance.info/network/agenda#article-anchor>.

34 A. Przeworski and J. Sprague, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

indispensable instruments of politics and thus potentially of political change. They offer a means of integrating local activism with politics at other levels (regional, national, international) – and of translating local activism into broader policy agendas. And if there remains a place for socialist parties, there also remains one for the SI and its practice of internationalism centred on them. If so, one hope is that the Progressive Alliance will contribute to the renewal of the SI, just as the Progressive Alliance's diverse members are contributing to a renewal of socialist parties. From this perspective, the fact that several political parties are members of both organizations is a promising sign.

Further Reading

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Municipal Socialism

SHELTON STROMQUIST

Municipal socialism has been an unstable concept historically.¹ While directly associated with the onset of the Industrial Revolution and its impact on the lives of workers in cities, its proponents drew on traditions of utopian communalism that antedated, or at least coincided with, the onset of industrialism. While it is most commonly thought of as a species of social democratic *politics*, municipal socialism also came to be identified with the direct seizure of power in cities, as in the Paris Commune, or more ephemerally in the political context of urban general strikes – Seattle or Winnipeg in 1919, for instance – or with the defence of Republican cities like Barcelona in the Spanish Civil War.² The classic incarnation of municipal socialism appeared with the onset of ‘Red Vienna’ and the election of a social democratic city council and mayor in May 1919.³ Revolutionary practice of what might be thought of as ‘municipal socialism’ often consoorted with anarchists’ visions of working-class self-governance.

Socialists who sought to reinvent cities along social democratic lines often had to contend with various forms of municipal reform politics that cannibalized social democratic ideas and practices with respect to municipal

¹ This chapter draws on material from the author’s forthcoming book, *Claiming the City: A Global History of Workers’ Fight for Municipal Socialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2022).

² On the Paris Commune, see below; on Seattle, D. Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and, on Barcelona, Ch. Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010); S. Gorostiza, H. March, and D. Sauri, ‘Servicing customers in revolutionary times: the experience of the collectivized Barcelona Water Company during the Spanish Civil War’, *Antipode* 45, 4 (2012), pp. 908–25.

³ See, for instance, M. Seliger, *Sozialdemokratie und Kommunalpolitik in Wien. Zu einigen Aspekten sozialdemokratischer Politik in der Vor- und Zwischenkriegszeit* (Vienna: Jugend & Volk Verlag, 1980); H. Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919–1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

enterprise (trams, water, sewerage, electricity, and gas) while sharply differentiating themselves from class components of municipal socialists' programmes. Examples of such middle-class reform politics abound in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in places like Birmingham, England, and Cleveland, Ohio. Their reforms ranged from 'municipal trading' where cities established private corporations to operate essential services to limited municipalization of 'natural monopolies'.⁴

Definitions and Theoretical Underpinnings

For the purposes of definition, 'municipal socialism' (sometimes derisively referred to as 'sewer socialism') encompassed an inclusive, locally grounded social democratic politics that sought to institute or expand a robust public sector of services essential to the health and wellbeing of urban populations, whether in small or large cities. This politics demands the elimination of a restrictive municipal franchise that limited the electorate on the basis of wealth, gender, or length and type of residence. Perhaps most importantly, social democratic governance necessitated empowering cities to govern their own affairs and to fundamentally revise taxes on wealth and property in order to generate the revenue needed to support expanded public services. While non-socialist urban reformers shared common ground with socialists in some specific reforms – for instance, housing or factory inspection, public health surveys, or limited forms of public enterprise – they generally parted company over socialists' support for expansive commitment to public ownership, direct employment of city workers in an enlarged public sector, a wholly unrestricted municipal franchise, and increased taxes on property and wealth.⁵

4 D. Fraser, 'Birmingham', in D. Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 78–110; J. P. Gehrke, 'A radical endeavor: Joseph Chamberlain and the emergence of municipal socialism in Birmingham', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 75, 1 (2016), pp. 23–57; J. J. Sheehan, 'Liberalism and the city in nineteenth-century Germany', *Past & Present* 51 (1971), pp. 116–37; T. Johnson, *My Story* (New York: AMS Press, 1970 [1911]); also G. Radford, 'From municipal socialism to public authorities: institutional factors in the shaping of American public enterprise', *Journal of American History* 90, 3 (2003), pp. 863–90; E. Leopold and D. A. MacDonald, 'Municipal socialism then and now: some lessons for the Global South', *Third World Quarterly* 33, 10 (2012), pp. 1837–53.

5 On non-socialist municipal reform in a transatlantic context, see D. T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 52–75, 160–208; S. Stromquist, *Reinventing 'the People': The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 83–106.

The ideology and practice of municipal socialism evolved in tandem with the growth of urban, industrial society in the West and around the globe. That history can be demarcated into distinct periods. The idea of self-governing 'communes' in which workers democratically shaped their own urban structures provided a key organizing idea in utopian socialist and anarchist revolutionary experiments in western Europe and the United States between 1820 and 1870. The Paris Commune of 1871 embodied those aspirations, and its tragic demise reinforced a turn towards political action among socialists. The formation of the Second International in 1889 marked the formal turn towards politics on a global scale at both the parliamentary and the municipal level. The activism and programmatic self-definition of municipal socialists between 1890 and 1914 constituted the 'classic' formative period of its history. While the First World War led to the collapse of the Second International, it also crystallized a growing opposition to autocratic governance and a strong impulse to democratize and socialize the governance of cities. Those aspirations bore fruit in the years immediately following the war. Expanded municipal suffrage and the near universal adoption of woman suffrage signified a democratic revolution and enlarged the playing field for municipal socialists. The interwar period brought unprecedented levels of success for socialists in city politics. Social democrats and communists advanced their agendas even as worldwide depression, the rise of fascism, and the Second World War posed new impediments to their progress. The rise of a new left in the post-Second World War period and anti-colonial struggles in much of the Global South created a new political context in which democratic governance and socialization of cities found renewed support. In the United States and Europe the social democratic left and their Green Party allies again gave focus to cities as laboratories for working-class empowerment. A 'new municipalism' looked past existing structures of local power to new forms of collective self-governance.⁶ In the post-colonial world cities also took on new meaning with the decolonizing of inherited structures of power and authority. Like their Western allies, new social movements in cities crystallized the popular democratic aspirations of non-Western peoples. Municipal socialists and a new working class led the fight against neoliberalism and for home rule.

6 Especially influential have been the theoretical work and empirical studies of H. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003 [1970]); and M. Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For a valuable case study of socialist institution building in Italy, see M. Kohn, *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Origins of Cities and the Defence of Municipal Elites' Property

Municipal socialists in industrializing countries of the late nineteenth century had to contend with the entrenched power of propertied urban elites. Growing cities had become reserves of plentiful and cheap labour, and urban elites' customary governance, reaching back literally centuries, had been essential to the defence of their property interests. Even when emerging nation-states challenged the autonomy and self-governance of cities, they also sought to use cities as defensive outposts to contain the new urban volatility and the unsettledness of class relations that were a byproduct of industrial revolution. 'Cities of power', as Göran Therborn has described national capital cities, gave concrete embodiment to the power of nation-states. But by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Europe and its settler colonies witnessed steeply rising migration to cities. Urban congestion and inadequate housing, sewerage, access to water, and other basic amenities made cities increasingly unlivable and beset with epidemic disease. Rising levels of discontent made cities powerful sites of popular resistance.⁷

As a response to urban upheaval, reform of municipal governance, promulgated in England (Municipal Reform Act, 1835) and Germany (vom Stein's Städteordnung, 1808), reconstituted the basic institutions of local government to enhance the power of new entrepreneurial elites. Severe restrictions on the municipal franchise set clear boundaries on the ability of the working classes to have a voice in local politics. Their growing numbers, however, seemed to offer the potential for power in local self-government.⁸ German and Swedish restrictions on workers' voting rights may have been the most draconian, but virtually every industrializing country curtailed the municipal franchise in ways that limited workers' power in cities.⁹ In this political

7 G. Therborn, *Cities of Power: The Urban, the National, the Popular, the Global* (London: Verso, 2017), pp. 7–12, 166–75, 202–10.

8 D. Fraser, *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982); S. Webb and B. Webb, 'An Alternative Judgment', in *The Manor and the Borough: English Local Government*, vol. III (London: Archon, 1963), pp. 712–55; H. Heffter, *Die deutsche Selbstverwaltung im 19. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der Ideen und Institutionen* (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler Verlag, 1950), pp. 84–92; G. Ritter, *Stein. Eine politische Biographie* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1958), pp. 251–74.

9 Th. Kühne, *Dreiklassenwahlrecht und Wahlkultur in Preußen 1867–1914. Landtagswahlen zwischen korporativer Tradition und politischem Massenmarkt* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1994), pp. 103–27, 479–92, 575–83; P. Hirsch and H. Lindemann, *Das kommunale Wahlrecht* (Berlin, 1905); E. D. Mellquist, *Rösträtt efter förtjänst? Riksdagsdebatten om den kommunala rösträtten i Sverige, 1862–1900* (Stockholm: Stadshistoriska Institutet, 1974); N. Blewett, 'The franchise in the United Kingdom, 1885–1918', *Past & Present* 32 (1965), pp. 25–56. In France, although the male franchise was largely unrestricted, the self-governing capacity of cities

context workers created a new politics fuelled by rising levels of labour conflict in the 1880s and 1890s. As strike levels surged, workers turned to new forms of political organization, above all in the municipal arena.¹⁰

'Municipal socialism' as first conceived drew on existing traditions of popular self-activity and utopian communalism which antedated the surging interest in utopian socialism during the early decades of the nineteenth century. The capacity of popular crowds, often led by women, to regulate markets in food had manifested itself in the eighteenth-century cities of Britain and France. These actions prefigured political efforts by workers to claim the right of self-government in the urban communities they inhabited.¹¹ Building on the communitarian experiments inspired by Robert Owen, Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier, P.-J. Proudhon, but also Marx, envisioned the empowerment of communities to regulate their own affairs. For Proudhon, a decentralized mutualism offered the most promising path to constituting the 'just' society, not through state action 'from above' but by social transformation 'from below'.¹²

The Paris Commune

The most vivid example of urban social transformation from below, brief though it may have been, came with the rise and destruction of the Paris Commune. Drawing inspiration from Proudhon, the Commune affirmed decentralized, democratic decision-making and co-operative production. But it also served as a lightning rod for divisions within the socialist movement. Even as the saga of the Commune unfolded, Marx wrote to Wilhelm

was severely hampered by national legislation and state administrative practice; see M. J. McQuillan, 'The Development of Municipal Socialism in France, 1880–1914', unpublished dissertation, University of Virginia, 1973, pp. 33–9.

- 10 R. Markey, 'The emergence of the Labor Party at the municipal level in NSW, 1891–1900', *Australian Journal of History and Politics* 31, 3 (1985), pp. 408–17; R. Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880–1900* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1988); E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Economic Fluctuations and Some Social Movements since 1800', in E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967); D. Montgomery, 'Strikes in nineteenth-century America', *Social Science History* 4, 1 (1980), pp. 81–104.
- 11 E. P. Thompson, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century', *Past & Present* 50 (1971), pp. 76–136; G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History, 1730–1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964), pp. 156–63; A. Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 151.
- 12 M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958 [1949]), pp. 27–8; R. L. Hoffman, *Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Political Theory of P.-J. Proudhon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 309–38; also C. J. Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 15–25.

Liebknrecht that it manifested ‘too great *honnêteté* (*decency*)’, and to Ludwig Kugelmann he spoke of their ‘too “honourable” scrupulousness!’ even as he praised the Parisians’ ‘resilience’, their ‘historical initiative’, and their ‘capacity for sacrifice’.¹³ Paul Brousse, anarchist turned socialist, came to believe that ‘meaningful socialist measures could be achieved on the local level prior to revolution at the centre’.¹⁴ The American political economist Richard T. Ely saw the ‘insurrection in Paris’ as simply a form of ‘extreme local self-government’.¹⁵ Eduard Bernstein saw in the Commune a convergence between Marx and Proudhon around the value of local ‘autonomy as the preliminary condition of social emancipation’. For Bernstein, ‘democratic organization from the bottom upwards’ was ‘the way to the realization of socialism’.¹⁶ Despite misgivings, Marx also wrote retrospectively in glowing terms of ‘the serene working men’s Paris of the Commune’, and he acknowledged the wonderful ‘change the Commune had wrought’.¹⁷ For municipal socialists, the Paris Commune retained its iconic status well into the twentieth century.

Programmatic Municipal Socialism

From the mid-1890s through to the end of the First World War municipal socialists in Europe and settler colonies around the globe actively contended for power to rebuild cities and their essential services along socialist lines. They also served as the vanguard in campaigns to democratize cities by pushing for a universal franchise and demanding that government be open to greater public scrutiny. According to Patrizia Dogliani, municipal activists created their own networks across national boundaries that enabled them to share experiences and use their cities as ‘experimental laboratories for the

13 Marx to Wilhelm Liebknrecht, 6 April 1871, and Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 12 April 1871, *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), vol. XLIV, pp. 128, 131–2. See also R. Tombs, *The Paris Commune 1871* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 199–200.

14 P. Brousse, ‘Le socialisme pratique’, in the anarchist paper *La Solidarité Révolutionnaire*, published in exile in Barcelona, June/July 1873, quoted in D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870–1890* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 41–4.

15 R. T. Ely, *French and German Socialism in Modern Times* (New York: Harper, 1883), quoted in P. M. Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre: Americans and the Paris Commune* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 189.

16 E. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 159–61, translated from the original *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz Verlag, 1899).

17 K. Marx, ‘The Civil War in France’, in *Marx: Later Political Writings*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 202, 194, 188–9.

design of a future society'.¹⁸ As socialists around the world turned their attention to the municipality, they cobbled together an action 'programme' that enjoyed remarkable uniformity from one urban context to another irrespective of national differences. That uniformity was neither accidental nor merely coincidental. It sprang from a common set of conditions of daily life that stirred socialists to action.

Searching for the promised economic opportunity, working-class migrants flooded the neighbourhoods and the factories of cities around the world. Instead of opportunity they found economic insecurity, dangerous working conditions, crowded and substandard housing, disease-infested water, and poor sanitation. Workers had few public services, and local government operated cities as private reserves for the wealthy who sought to protect their property and maintain their privileges. Faced with these conditions, workers seized the political initiative to claim new social and economic rights. With mass strikes in the 1890s that swept through docks and coal mines, rail yards and building sites, textile factories and machine shops, local activists ignited a new politics promising an urban peoples' agenda for fundamentally transforming urban landscapes.

Whether in Bradford, England, Broken Hill, New South Wales, Stuttgart, Germany, Carmaux, France, or Milwaukee, Wisconsin, municipal socialists crafted fundamentally similar programmes around which to rally their working-class constituents.¹⁹ A leading advocate of municipal socialism in Britain, Russell Smart, had been elected to serve on the platform drafting committee at the 1893 founding convention of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in Bradford. In time he would become a vocal critic of the nationalizing propensities of his Labour Party colleagues. But in 1895 he formulated the core principles behind his party's commitment to 'Municipal Socialism'. Echoing Keir Hardie's call for a 'thorough-going Collectivism', he also stressed the importance of 'decentralization' in the movement for 'English Democracy'. 'The Socialist', he argued, 'looks to the Municipality and the Parish Council rather than to the national government as the means whereby the problems of democracy may be successfully solved.'²⁰ Smart

18 P. Dogliani, 'European municipalism in the first half of the twentieth century: the socialist network', *Contemporary European History* 11, 4 (2002), pp. 573–96 at p. 576.

19 On the struggles for socialist municipal governance in France, see J. W. Scott, 'Mayors versus Police Chiefs: Socialist Municipalities Confront the French State', in J. M. Merriman (ed.), *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), pp. 230–45; also McQuillan, 'The Development of Municipal Socialism in France, 1880–1914', pp. 1–2, 113–41.

20 H. R. Smart, 'Municipal Socialism', Manchester, Manchester Labour Library, 1895, ILP Papers, London School of Economics Archives, p. 2.

enumerated the fundamental goals for municipal work: ‘municipalisation of monopolies’ (gas and waterworks, electric lighting, tram and omnibus service); sanitary workers housing to be constructed by an expanded city works department; municipally owned enterprises to produce clothing, provide coal, and operate laundries, bakeries, and trams; municipal co-operative farms; free subsidized school feeding programmes; expanded taxation of landed investments; and work relief for the unemployed. But Smart also acknowledged that the path from ‘competitive anarchy’ to ‘orderly collectivism’ rose gradually. Victory would come not in a single cataclysm but through a ‘never-ending series of desultory fights between the well-disciplined, officered forces of the enemy, amply supplied with the sinews of war, and the looser formed battalions of the labour army blindly struggling for social justice’. But for those ‘whose mental vision can pierce the darkness of the present . . . the future looks bright with hope, for we see shining in the distance the lights of our New Jerusalem; the city whose wealth consists not in the fortunes of its millionaires, but in the health and happiness of the men and women who inhabit it’.²¹ Smart articulated a municipal programme that with variations in emphasis local socialists around the world also voiced.²²

Global Context

Linked by telegraphic communications, expanding railway networks, and faster steamship travel, municipal socialists around the world shared the fruits of their organizing. They consumed and republished news reports from abroad. They read each others’ pamphlets and sent delegates to their respective party conventions. They wove an internationalism from below stamped by the shared experience of industrialization and its consequences. This *translocal* political activism on occasion animated debate at the periodic

21 Ibid., p. 16. See also D. Clark, *Colne Valley: Radicalism to Socialism: The Portrait of a Northern Constituency in the Formative Years of the Labour Party 1890–1910* (London: Longman, 1981), pp. 45–6, 174; R. B. Perks, ‘“The Rising Sun of Socialism”: Trade Unionism and the Emergence of the Independent Labour Party in Huddersfield’, in K. Laybourn and D. James (eds.), *The Rising Sun of Socialism: The Independent Labour Party in the Textile District of the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1890 and 1914* (Bradford: West Yorkshire Archives Service, 1991), pp. 88–9.

22 See, for instance, on Broken Hill, NSW, *The Tocsin*, 26 July 1900; G. Dale, *The Industrial History of Broken Hill* (Melbourne: Fraser & Jenkinson, 1918), pp. 252–3; for Malmö, Sweden, *Arbetet: Organ för Klassmedveten Arbetarrörelse* (Malmö), 9 December 1890; see also annual reports of the SAP, *Socialdemokraternas program, 1897 till 1990* (Stockholm: Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, 2001).

gatherings of socialist leaders at the congresses of the Second Socialist International.²³

Building Foundations

Fledgling labour and socialist parties put forward brash proposals for remaking cities. Though badly outnumbered at first, they won handfuls of early electoral contests and pushed ahead with the painstaking tasks of local party building. They engaged their elite opponents in the halls of city councils, school boards, and poor relief agencies in what were often perceived to be disruptive ways.²⁴ E. R. Hartley, a master butcher and member of the Independent Labour Party, was a contentious presence on the Bradford (England) City Council after his election in 1895. He challenged the norms that had traditionally ruled the chambers by contesting the routine election of committee chairs and questioning salary increases for city engineers when lower-paid employees were denied pay rises. He gave a councillor from another party ‘such a basting [as] he will never forget and probably never forgive’ over the councillor’s suggestion that unsanitary conditions in poor neighbourhoods should simply be subject to ‘natural evolution’.²⁵

Hartley’s campaign for ‘municipal socialism’ seemed a constant, all-consuming, and at times quixotic battle. But, as Gerhard A. Ritter observed about *Gemeindesozialisten* in Germany, such experiences entailed balancing revolutionary aspirations and practical, day-to-day goals:

It is difficult on Sundays to speak of class warfare and revolution in a party meeting, when in the previous days one was finding common ground with one’s liberal colleagues in the city council over the necessity for putting up lights in a dark city street.²⁶

23 See regular reports in diverse local publications, e.g., the *Barrier Daily Truth* (Broken Hill), *Social Democratic Herald* (Milwaukee), *Kommunale Praxis* (Berlin); *Kongreß-Protokolle der Zweiten Internationale*, vol. 1, Paris 1889–Amsterdam 1904 (Glashütten im Taunus: Verlag Detlev, reprint, 1975), pp. 330–1. See also Dogliani, ‘European municipalism in the first half of the twentieth century’.

24 See, for instance, the censure of Frankfurt socialist city councillor Max Quarck in 1901: K. Maly, *Das Regiment der Parteien. Geschichte der Frankfurter Stadtverordnetenversammlung*, vol. 11, 1901–1933 (Frankfurt am Main: Waldemar Kramer, 1995), p. 25.

25 E. R. Hartley Diary, 1, 1900, 9 January, 13 February 1900; Minutes of the Bradford City Council, 11 February 1896, West Yorkshire Archives Service, Bradford Public Library. For an excellent account of Bradford’s local politics, see K. Laybourne, ‘“The Defence of the Bottom Dog”: The Independent Labour Party in Local Politics’, in D. G. Wright and J. A. Jowitt (eds.), *Victorian Bradford: Essays in Honour of Jack Reynolds* (Bradford: City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, 1982), pp. 223–44.

26 G. A. Ritter, *Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelminischen Reich. Die Sozialdemokratische Partei und die freien Gewerkschaften 1890–1914* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1959), p. 217. Translations from German are mine.

Though at times marginalized within the ranks of their own parties, municipal socialists battled on, asserting the relevance of the difficulties that constrained the lives of workers – unclean water, epidemic disease, ramshackle and overcrowded housing, unemployment, and a lack of simple amenities like public baths or parks that would ease the burdens of daily life. Despite the barriers they faced, these municipal political movements witnessed rising success in the new century. They won power in a few cities and in others gained a voice in city affairs with which governing elites now had to contend. They forged transnational ties based on shared experience and on occasion participated across national boundaries in a widening network of municipal social democratic movements. By the onset of the First World War municipal socialists had established themselves as a force to be reckoned with in cities around the globe and within their own social democratic parties.

The results were impressive. In the United States as many as 174 cities elected socialist administrations between 1911 and 1920. Milwaukee, of course, led the way, but others included Schenectady, NY, Reading, PA, Flint, MI, Hamilton, OH, Minneapolis, MN, Davenport, IA, Bridgeport, CT, and New Castle, IN. In Ohio, twenty-nine cities elected socialist administrations during this decade. The Socialist Party of America (SPA) estimated in 1911 that 1,141 socialists had been elected to local and state offices in 36 states and 324 municipalities. Those numbers grew significantly in succeeding years. In 1911 alone socialists won control of twenty-three cities.²⁷ In the United States, the political mobilization around municipal issues was substantial and worthy of comparison to that in other industrializing countries. In Britain, the ILP and the Labour Party steadily gained ground in municipal elections from 1901 to 1913. The number of contested municipalities increased from 52 in 1901 to 123 in 1913. Labour candidates elected to local offices in those years rose from 31 to 171.²⁸ French socialists, after a run of impressive municipal victories between 1892 and 1900, gained further ground in the new century. By 1912, socialists had ruling majorities in almost 300 French cities and towns and a total of more than 5,000 elected municipal officials.²⁹ Australian Labor Party candidates had scattered success in municipalities during the 1890s. But in the silver mining town of Broken Hill Labor won

27 R. W. Judd, *Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 19; J. Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912–1925* (New York: Vintage, 1967), pp. 43–5, 93, 103–18.

28 M. G. Sheppard and John L. Halstead, 'Labour's municipal election performance in provincial England and Wales 1901–1913', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 39 (1979), pp. 39–62.

29 Scott, 'Mayors versus Police Chiefs', pp. 230–1; McQuillen, 'Development of Municipal Socialism in France', pp. 180–1.

control of city government in 1900 and held power for many decades thereafter.³⁰ Labor's municipal activity in New South Wales picked up noticeably after 1905. Labor won control of local governments in two additional working-class towns Auburn and Redfern, in 1908. Others followed: Liverpool in 1911 and Lithgow and Dubbo in 1914. At least 102 candidates ran for local office across the state in 1910, and in Sydney Labor elected five candidates in 1912 and eleven in 1915, along with the election of a labour mayor.³¹ The success of Germany's SPD overshadowed municipal socialists in other countries. In 1911, 410 cities and 2,240 rural hamlets elected, respectively, a total of 2,015 and 6,646 socialist councillors.³² Social democrats in Sweden carried the burden of severe municipal franchise restrictions, but after the modest electoral reforms in 1909 the number of socialists elected to city councils tripled in 1910. They gained more seats in 1911 and 1912. Nevertheless, only a minority of working-class voters had won the franchise before 1914. The 'earthquake' in municipal voting came only in the aftermath of the First World War.³³ Vienna, of course, would prove to be a crucial laboratory for social democrats. Before the war, they had made modest gains following initial victories in 1900. Local SDAPÖ leaders Franz Schuhmeier and Jakob Reumann used their council positions to challenge the established order of business in the council, much as did municipal socialists elsewhere. They laid the groundwork for post-war municipal social democracy as the old order collapsed and the franchise was broadened. 'Red Vienna' came to be a beacon for socialists around the world, as Milwaukee had been since 1910.³⁴

War and Post-War Breakthroughs

The collapse of the Second International and waves of war-induced nationalism created an atmosphere of political crisis for social democrats around the world. But in cities municipal socialists pursued a pragmatic agenda. Some opposed the war and conscription from the outset; now faced with an unwelcome war, others simply reaffirmed their commitment to address the material needs of working-class workers and their families. They mobilized around wartime

30 Markey, 'Emergence of the Labor Party', pp. 410–12. Most comprehensively for Broken Hill, see Dale, *Industrial History of Broken Hill*.

31 M. Hogan, 'Municipal Labor in New South Wales', *Labour History* 72 (1997), pp. 124–5, 128, 131–2.

32 *Kommunale Praxis* 11, 36/37 (1911), pp. 1123–4.

33 *Socialdemokratiska Partistyrelsens redogörelse*, 1911, p. 147, and 1912, pp. 97, 110.

34 Seliger, *Sozialdemokratie und Kommunalpolitik in Wien*, pp. 49–55. See also John W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897–1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 271–4, 282–4; F. Patzer, 'Die sozialdemokratische Fraktion im Wiener Gemeinderat. Seit ihrem Bestehen bis zum ersten Weltkrieg (1900–1914/18)', *Verein für Geschichte der Stadt Wien, Jahrbuch* 10 (1952/3), pp. 251–84, 254–5.



Fig. 16.1 Reumannhof, Red Vienna, c. 1925. With the social democrats' municipal electoral triumph in May 1919, Vienna's socialists set forth an ambitious agenda to revolutionize municipal taxes, increase public services, provide municipal bathing facilities, and, most importantly, build sanitary and comfortable public housing in working-class districts. Reumannhof, which opened in the mid-1920s, was named after Jakob Reumann, a wood turner, trade union activist, city councillor from Favoriten, and the first socialist mayor of Vienna, serving from 1919 to 1923. (Photograph by A. & E. Frankl/Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

economic issues – sharply rising prices, rippling unemployment, reduced public services, and the curtailment of free expression. Women led campaigns of aggrieved tenants and spearheaded food riots; in the halls of city councils, socialists fought to advance their own municipal agenda.³⁵

The war produced political upheaval that took a variety of forms. Many women and men won an unlimited franchise. And in cities the elimination of the restrictive franchise based on property ownership or length of residence and plural voting of the wealthy undermined the foundations of elite rule. But municipal socialists still faced an uneven political terrain. German Workers and Soldiers' Councils took on the mantle of the revolution and some elements of the Social Democratic Party seized the initiative to reconstruct cities.³⁶ In Austria those impulses proved more lasting, with the creation of 'Red Vienna' as a model socialist municipality. In the United States the municipal socialist movement after the war faced a punitive state and its employer allies. Wartime persecution, a post-war 'Red Scare', massive lost strikes, and an emboldened 'open shop' movement collapsed the space American socialists needed to rebuild their movement. In Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, and Britain, labour and socialist parties in municipalities found their legs and increased their effectiveness.

'Red Vienna'

For municipal socialists worldwide 'Red Vienna' became the shining example of all they had struggled to achieve in the years before the First World War.³⁷ The iconic meaning of Red Vienna stemmed from several factors. Vienna's socialists, under the most difficult circumstances, achieved the kind of transformation of their city that others only imagined was possible in the immediate post-war years.³⁸ The most notable breakthrough the socialists made was their

35 H. Lindemann, 'Die deutschen Gemeinden während des Krieges', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 20 (1914), pp. 1073–8.

36 E. Kolb, *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918–1919* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1962); F. Bey-Heard, *Hauptstadt und Staatsumwälzung Berlin 1919. Problematik und Scheitern der Rätebewegung in der Berliner Kommunalverwaltung* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1969).

37 'Austria's Bright Spot: The Achievements of Vienna's Socialist Municipality', *Australian Worker*, 19 August 1925; 'Municipal Socialism: What It Has Accomplished for Vienna', *The Worker* (Brisbane), 7 December 1927. See also 'A Socialist City: An Australian Visits Vienna', *The Worker* (Brisbane), 5 December 1928. On the attention garnered in Europe and the United States by Vienna's housing revolution, see D. T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 384–6; L. H. Pink, 'Vienna Excels', in *The New Day in Housing* (New York: John Day, 1928), pp. 58–66.

38 German social democrats took a very different path in the development of worker housing in the post-war period but viewed the Vienna experiment with a degree of

programme to address the acute housing needs of working-class families made possible by Vienna's provincial autonomy under a new constitution and a massive revision of the city's tax structure. Vienna recorded 63,924 new dwellings built between 1919 and 1934. However, critics also noted the rise in homelessness and the poor housing still occupied by the vast majority of workers.³⁹ The Austromarxist leadership failed to win and hold power nationally in the new republic, but, as Tom Bottomore has argued, Otto Bauer's uniquely Austromarxist conception of a 'slow revolution', in which 'the conquest of power by the working class had to be accompanied by a gradual, patient construction of socialist institutions', closely matched the actual progress on the ground in socialist-governed Vienna.⁴⁰ Attempts to replicate the success of Red Vienna in other settings, for instance, the comparatively new city of Tel Aviv in Palestine, confronted legal limits to municipal home rule and opposition from bourgeois propertied interests that undermined workers' ability to implement their socialist programme.⁴¹ And in Austria the social democrats' weakness outside Vienna ultimately cast a dark shadow that would lead to the violent overthrow of Red Vienna in 1934.⁴²

Interwar Municipal Socialism

The advance of municipal socialism globally during the interwar period stands in marked contrast to the trajectory of the movement in the United States. The elimination of municipal franchise restrictions and the adoption

ambivalent admiration; see Adelheid von Saldern, 'Sozialdemokratie und kommunale Wohnungsbaupolitik in den 20er Jahren – am Beispiel von Hamburg und Wien', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 25 (1985), pp. 183–237.

39 H. Gruber offers detailed data and criticism of the Vienna socialists' housing programme; see H. Gruber, 'Municipal Socialism', in Gruber, *Red Vienna*, ch. 3, pp. 45–80; see also, importantly, H. Weihsmann, *Das Rote Wien. Sozialdemokratische Architektur und Kommunalpolitik 1919–1934* (Vienna: Promedia, 2002), especially pp. 49–55.

40 T. Bottomore, 'Introduction', in T. Bottomore and P. Goode (eds.), *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 26, 38–9.

41 I. Gracier, 'Red Vienna and municipal socialism in Tel Aviv, 1925–1928', *Journal of Historical Geography* 15, 4 (1989), pp. 385–401; on other cases of municipal socialism globally in the 1920s, see 'Under Socialist Rule: Thousands of the World's Cities', *The Worker* (Brisbane), 18 December 1929.

42 On the limits the social democrats faced outside Vienna, see C. Jeffrey, *Social Democracy in the Austrian Provinces, 1918–1934: Beyond Red Vienna* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995). The bitter fight with opponents on the right is treated in many works, but see especially J. Lewis, *Fascism and the Working Class in Austria, 1918–1934* (New York: Berg, 1991); A. Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism: From Red Vienna to Civil War, 1927–1934* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); J. Wasserman, *Black Vienna: The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918–1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014). See also Helmut Konrad, Chapter 2, this volume.

of women's suffrage around the world at the end of the war, along with the collapse of autocratic regimes and old empires, gave municipal activists new opportunities to build on their pre-war gains and secure the footing they had secured on the home front during the war. While post-war political contexts varied enormously – from revolution to reform to retrenchment – municipal socialists could rightly claim enhanced capacity to govern cities, based on their own painstakingly acquired experience in city affairs. They believed that cities could indeed be the laboratories for a new, socialized order that promised citizens a voice in public affairs and better living conditions.⁴³

The advances made by municipal socialists continued to be contested. Entrenched liberal and conservative parties campaigned against 'home rule' for cities, which – if granted – would have allowed the cities more power to control taxation and fund more generous public services.⁴⁴

The battering down of gender restrictions on suffrage opened the door to further women's activism. Municipal socialism had provided an early arena for women's political activism in pursuit of more humane living conditions in cities. Some cities and states with limited forms of women's suffrage had facilitated this activism, and numbers of women combined campaigns for universal suffrage with municipal initiatives, on occasion holding office in municipalities.⁴⁵ In general, socialist and labour parties supported women's suffrage and women's activism in municipalities, although residual patterns of discrimination coloured some of these efforts. Even in Red Vienna, some historians argue, patterns of discrimination and cultural engineering of the new 'orderly worker family' left women citizens marginalized if not altogether powerless.⁴⁶ Such patterns of discrimination also marked some socialists' activism with respect to non-white and ethnically diverse populations as well. Notable was the 'White Australia' policy of the ALP and the

43 'Under Socialist Rule: Thousands of the World's Cities', *The Worker* (Brisbane), 1929.

44 Dogliani, 'European municipalism in the first half of the twentieth century', pp. 576–7. The fight over 'home rule' played out in numerous American cities. See, for example, the struggles of Cleveland's reform mayor, in Johnson, *My Story*, and, in Milwaukee, S. M. Miller, *Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism, 1910–1920* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973).

45 M. R. Beard, *Woman's Work in Municipalities* (New York: Longman, 1915); J. M. Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman: Vida Goldstein* (Carlton: University of Melbourne Press, 1993), pp. 25–6, 180–4; S. Henderson, 'Local Government Reform', 3rd Session, *Proceedings, National Council of the Women of New Zealand, April 20–28, 1898, Wellington* (Wanganui: A. D. Willis, 1898), pp. 25–34; E. P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), pp. 11–13.

46 H. Gruber, 'The "New Woman": Realities and Illusions of Gender Equality in Red Vienna', in P. M. Graves and H. Gruber (eds.), *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe between the Two World Wars* (New York: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 56–94.

willingness of socialists in the United States to acquiesce in the segregation practices of the dominant culture. Municipal socialists were not simply passive bystanders to racism and gender discrimination.⁴⁷

The interwar generation of municipal socialists focused its attention on two domains. First, they sought to sustain a series of international organizations devoted to strengthening the self-governing capacity of cities. A succession of international organizations, 'more technical than political', pursued objectives transnationally of enhancing municipal life and governmental capacity. The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), established in 1913, was reconstituted after the war at a 1925 Amsterdam congress. During its 'golden age' over the next decade, socialists maintained a presence in the organization, but more prominent were professional city administrators and representatives of national associations of cities. Two other international organizations, fuelled by the idealistic spirit of French municipal socialist Edgard Milhaud, kept alive the ideal of the 'political and economic autonomy of local authorities'. They were convinced that 'most public services should be under municipal control as mutual, cooperative undertakings'. A journal Milhaud established in 1908, *Annales de la régie directe* (later, in 1925 *Annales de l'économie collective*), survived two world wars and the rise and collapse of fascism. In 1951, he and others formed the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) as a means for strengthening both 'European federalism and local self-government'.⁴⁸

In the second domain, local social democratic and communist activists sought to create and defend socialist municipal enclaves, such as Red Vienna or the 'little Moscovs' in Welsh mining villages and other, mostly isolated, working-class enclaves in Europe. This phenomenon of 'small-place communism' bears some resemblance to municipal socialist strongholds in the years before the First World War, sprouting literally in some cases in the same soil, but in other circumstances their origins and class profile had a quite different character.⁴⁹ While the factors contributing to their radicalism

47 S. M. Miller, 'For white men only: the Socialist Party of America and issues of gender, ethnicity and race', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2, 3 (2003), pp. 299–301; W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Socialism and the Negro problem', *New Review: Weekly Review of International Socialism* 1, 5 (1913), pp. 138–41; J. Carey and C. McLiskey (eds.), *Creating White Australia* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009); N. Kirk, *Transnational Radicalism and the Connected Lives of Tom Mann and Robert Samuel Ross* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 200–25.

48 Dogliani, 'European municipalism in the first half of the twentieth century', pp. 584, 587–8, 593, 595.

49 See, for instance, a transnational communitarian experiment in the Soviet Union, S. Bernstein and R. Cherny, 'Searching for the Soviet dream: prosperity and disillusionment on the Soviet Seattle Agricultural Commune, 1921–1927', *Agricultural History* 88, 1 (2014), pp. 22–44.

varied, they shared occupational and 'counter-cultural' community histories that sustained traditions of local political mobilization.⁵⁰

Municipal Socialism: Colonial and Post-Colonial Cities

A good deal of the early effort to implement municipal socialism centred on Europe and its colonial settler states, including the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. However, experiments in municipal socialist governance manifested themselves in other parts of the world as well, notably Latin America (Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, and Argentina), India, and some countries of post-colonial Africa.

The imprint of colonial rule had a direct bearing on the structure of city governance in Europe's colonies. In Britain's settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand, local authorities were loosely guided by the mother country's municipal reform legislation of 1835. Colonists needed to establish some modicum of order and necessary urban infrastructure. While they resisted the imposition of local taxes, they demanded services from the colonial administration. As Auckland historian Graham Bush has argued, propertied locals preferred 'representation without taxation' in the face of the immense infrastructural demands of early settlement, not the least of which involved pacifying an indigenous population.⁵¹ Although state authorities retained considerable jurisdiction over the management of local affairs, growing social democratic movements in both Australia and New Zealand challenged local and state elites and laid claim to govern municipalities in the name of socialist principles. In a few cases, like Broken Hill, New South Wales, they succeeded before the end of the nineteenth century.⁵² In South Africa colonizers

50 A. Knotter, "'Little Moscovs'" in western Europe: the ecology of small-place communism', *International Review of Social History* 56, 3 (2011), pp. 475–510; S. MacIntyre, *Little Moscovs: Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Interwar Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); B. Paulson and A. Ricci, 'Revisiting Italy's "Little Moscow"', *World Policy Journal* 18, 3 (2001), pp. 81–8.

51 G. W. A. Bush, *Decently and in Order: The Government of the City of Auckland 1840–1971* (Auckland: Collins, 1971), 42; G. W. A. Bush, *Local Government and Politics in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995); F. A. Larcombe, *A History of Local Government in New South Wales* (Sydney: Local Government and Shire Association, 1955), pp. 5–15, 19–23.

52 Markey, 'Emergence of the Labor Party', pp. 408–17; B. Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 82–90; V. Burgmann, 'In Our Time': *Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885–1905* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 139–41, 176–82; B. E. Kennedy, *Silver, Sin, and Sixpenny Ale: A Social History of Broken Hill, 1883–1921* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978); Dale, *Industrial History of Broken Hill*.

transplanted municipal administration from England. While promoting 'public' enterprise, they did so typically in the interest of corporations or mining companies, and based taxes on consumption that disadvantaged impoverished African subjects. Reforms in urban sanitation frequently led to deeply entrenched racial segregation in housing.⁵³ The robust presence of the Labour Party in Johannesburg after 1911, while representing the interests of white workers alone, produced a series of reforms that paralleled the programme of municipal socialists in other European and colonial settings.⁵⁴

Despite the heavy hand of colonial authorities, local government provided a training ground for early leaders in movements for national independence. Ashish Bose noted that many of India's national leaders were 'associated with municipal work during British rule'. The inherited structures of Maharajas' political authority, and the 'containment' policies built into British-sanctioned 'local self-government' after 1870, gave only 'limited administrative responsibilities to Indian leaders without adequate financial power'. Local leaders struggled to improve municipal services in cities whose rapid growth outstripped their infrastructure.⁵⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru served as 'chairman of the Allahabad Municipality' from 1921 to 1923. Frustrated by the imbalance in investment between the 'densely crowded city proper' and the more dispersed 'civil lines' settled by colonizers and wealthy Indians, Nehru proposed an equalizing 'tax on land values', which was unceremoniously rejected by the (British) district magistrate, leaving in place a consumption tax that fell heavily on the poor.⁵⁶ Independence opened new doors to civil administration of cities, but as Bose noted, 'the possibility of municipalities getting any attention from the champions of socialism who are all the time concerned with national issues is indeed remote'.⁵⁷

Post-colonial cities in Africa became magnets for massive rural to urban migration that strained the colonial infrastructure of urban life beyond its capacity to service the new residents' needs. Under colonial rule, cities had been sites of potential stabilization in which an African middle class might legitimate colonial rule. Despite limited direct representation, many urban

53 J. P. R. Maud, *City Government: The Johannesburg Experiment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), pp. 22–3, 50–68.

54 The reforms included employment of trade union labour, minimum wages, the eight-hour day, the establishment of municipal enterprises like a foundry and brickfields, and proposals for a municipal bank and coal mine: *ibid.* pp. 80–5.

55 A. Bose, 'Municipal socialism', *Economic and Political Weekly* 6, 12 (1971), pp. 681–2.

56 J. Nehru, *An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1962), pp. 143–4, quoted in Bose, 'Municipal socialism', p. 682.

57 Bose, 'Municipal socialism', p. 681.

Africans seized colonial institutions as spaces to cultivate an oppositional nationalist consciousness. The interventionism of the colonial state led, according to John Brennan, 'to a consciousness of entitlements among urban Africans that could be demanded from the state, and to a determination to overturn existing political and economic inequalities'.⁵⁸ That indeed could provide a foundation for a socialist urbanism, albeit of a peculiar sort. In post-colonial Tanzania, which became a model of African socialist experimentation, rural co-operative communities (ujamaa villages) had a primary claim to resources and ideological centrality. Tanzanian African National Union (TANU) party activists constituted the nervous system of political authority in the city, largely bypassing traditional institutions of urban governance, while affirming a socialist vision that celebrated rural (ujamaa) virtues in an urban context.⁵⁹

The pattern of socialist urbanism in revolutionary communist societies during the post-Second World War period followed a different course, although the dominant influence of central state actors bore some similarity to the privileging of national parliamentary strategies in social democratic movements. The collectivist institutions of post-revolutionary China in both rural and urban areas created new forms of local governance in a socialist context. 'Socialized governance' in China grew out of early rural communes and urban production brigades and defined new types of locality-based citizenship as a basis for entitlements and to register concerns or complaints. Local elections of committee members and ongoing deliberations gave local 'citizens' access to participation in local governance, but also facilitated social control by the state. As Sophia Woodman has noted, 'the committees . . . and their politics present few opportunities for citizens to engage in rule-making processes, however local'.⁶⁰ And in similar ways Cuba has struggled with a revolutionary generational transition in leadership at the national level. In recent times, local leaders have sought to overcome the legacy of a centralized state that essentially dictated policy to municipal and provincial assemblies.⁶¹

58 J. R. Brennan and A. Burton, 'Introduction' and 'The Emerging Metropolis: A History of Dar es Salaam, ca. 1862–2000', in J. Brennan and Y. Lawi (eds.), *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2007), pp. 6, 38, 42, 48–50. For the colonial context of Tanganyikan urbanization, see J. Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 381–404, 482–4.

59 E. Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 3–4, 6, 20, 36–42, 56–8.

60 S. Woodman, 'Local politics, local citizenship? Socialized governance in contemporary China', *China Quarterly* (London), 226 (2016), pp. 342–62 (quotation on p. 358).

61 L. Suarez Salazar, M. Ortega Breña, and J. Hostetler Diaz, 'Updating Cuban socialism: a utopian critique', *Latin American Perspectives* 41, 4 (2014), pp. 13–27.

The tension between local democracy and national parties' hegemony has proved enduring for both social democratic and communist societies.

Renewed efforts to institute municipal socialism came after the Second World War with rapid decolonization of former colonies. By the 1960s in the West and the Global South socialists and their allies undertook new initiatives to reclaim urban governance in order to expand the public sector and create more livable and egalitarian cities. Nowhere were these initiatives more widespread than in the cities of Latin America, where the challenge of neoliberalism was both formidable and at times violently propagated by the United States and its elite clients. But cities in Peru and Brazil, followed by Venezuela, Uruguay, and Argentina, and eventually Mexico and El Salvador, mounted a formidable challenge:

Left parties began to experiment with municipal socialism only with the advent of democratization in the 1980s . . . and devolved service provision to the municipal level partially in response to the swelling tide of social movements demanding popular participation and urban reform.⁶²

The 1960s saw the re-emergence of municipal activism on a global scale. This movement breathed new life into social democratic and labour parties, spawned green parties prepared to challenge existing governing coalitions over environmental issues, and promoted radical democratization of government at all levels, including municipalities. It drew energy from allied social movements, prominently the feminist movement and civil rights activism among people of colour.⁶³ Frequently led by immigrants and African-Americans, workers' centres in the United States have expanded the existing boundaries of the established trade union movement. In this more fertile political environment 'municipal socialism' has generated new interest politically (and historiographically.) Urban activists infused local politics with new agendas for tougher environmental regulation, gun control, minimum wage campaigns, and affordable housing. They also uncovered a 'hidden' municipal socialist inheritance – public ownership of municipal services (sewerage, water, waste management, public transit,

62 B. Goldfrank and A. Schrank, 'Municipal neoliberalism and municipal socialism: urban political economy in Latin America', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33, 2 (2009), pp. 448 (table of municipal socialist governed cities), 453 (quotation).

63 'Municipalism and feminism then and now: Hilary Wainwright talks to Jo Littler,' *Soundings* 74 (2020), pp. 10–16. In the United States, the early organizing efforts of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) signified this convergence of social movements; see J. Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), pp. 184–217.

libraries), unionized public sector workers, and municipal ownership of electricity and other utilities. While hardly a revolutionary domain, cities have continued to uphold the value of a robust public sector, graduated taxes on the property and incomes, and democratic participation. The work of local governing bodies has long since been open to public scrutiny. While many cities continue to have at-large elections, city managers, and city commissioners that limit the direct exercise of popular power, many of the largest cities and some smaller municipalities have retained strong mayor- and ward-based councils that are popularly elected. The limits of home rule and pre-emption by state or national governments continue to be contested terrain.⁶⁴

Efforts to democratize cities, frequently spearheaded by social democrats, have taken a variety of forms in recent times. Two arenas of struggles are of particular note: the struggle to reclaim municipal 'home rule' and attempts to build new forms of popular control of city budgeting authority. Conservatives in control of state and national governments, most notably in the United States, have systematically sought to curtail the power of workers and immigrants in cities where they constitute a majority. Urban activists have fought to implement progressive policies of environmental protection (regulating polluters and banning of plastic bags), gun control (more rigorous licensing and the banning of assault weapons), greater income equality through a higher minimum wage and progressive taxation, and radical reforms in policing.

A second arena of innovative struggle in cities was inspired by the efforts of Brazil's Workers' Party in Porto Alegre to create new methods of 'participatory budgeting' independent of local government institutions. The programme fosters a new model of 'state-civil society' relations that has energized municipal activists around the world. In Porto Alegre the process began with open neighbourhood meetings and regional 'thematic' gatherings where residents defined priorities for the city budget and forwarded them to an independently elected city-wide Budget Council. The process has drawn thousands of new people into political activity and produced what sociologist Gianpaolo Baiocchi has called 'the dynamism of the unorganized'. Participatory budgeting set in motion powerful redistributive programmes and dramatic improvements in the material conditions of daily life for the

64 M. Goldberg, 'Power to the City: The Progressive Case for Going Local', *The Nation*, 21 April 2014, pp. 11–18; B. R. Barber, *If Mayors Rule the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); G. Frug, *City Making: Building Communities without Walls* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

residents of poor neighbourhoods.⁶⁵ As many as 1,500 cities around the world have instituted some form of participatory budgeting. In New York, in 2015, twenty-four council districts engaged in such a process, with the *New York Times* reporting that ‘the greatest value of participatory budgeting has been as a means of access’, especially for those who are routinely excluded from electoral activity, including ‘the formerly incarcerated and the undocumented’. In one district, ‘two thirds of the ballots were cast in Spanish and Chinese’. And ‘of those who voted in participatory budgeting citywide, 39 percent reported household incomes of \$35,000 or less. This figure compares with 21 percent of those who voted in local elections in 2013.’⁶⁶

Significant elements of ‘municipal socialism’ have now become commonplace, though they are often not recognized as such. They provide a foundation for civic life in cities and a degree of wellbeing and public health unimaginable in the nineteenth century. In many municipalities around the globe the public expects democratic processes and popular control in city affairs. However, cities remain a battleground where corporate elites and neoliberal ideologues continue to challenge the right of cities and their citizens to regulate public life and ensure fairness. But as Göran Therborn notes, despite ‘the imagined tribe ... of capitalist globality’ and its urban concentrations of power, ‘ordinary people are not going away’.⁶⁷ Radical advocates of a ‘new municipalism’, drawing inspiration from Henri Lefebvre’s idea of the ‘right to the city’, conceive a ‘vision of collective self-governance-beyond-the-state’ that includes ‘subversive urban practices from squatting movements to guerrilla gardening to DIY [do-it-yourself] urbanism and housing cooperatives’.⁶⁸ For municipal socialists this is not altogether new terrain. Its roots lie in the fertile soil where municipal socialism first sprouted in the nineteenth century.

65 G. Baiocchi, *Militants and Citizens: The Politics of Participatory Democracy in Porto Alegre* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 37–41, 154–5; G. Baiocchi, ‘Brazilian cities in the nineties and beyond: new urban dystopias and utopias’, *Socialism and Democracy* 15, 2 (2001), pp. 47–8; G. Baiocchi, ‘Porto Alegre: The Dynamism of the Unorganised’, in D. Chavez and B. Goldfrank (eds.), *The Left in the City: Participatory Local Governments in Latin America* (London: Latin America Bureau, 2004), pp. 40–4; G. Baiocchi and E. Ganuza, ‘Participatory budgeting as if emancipation mattered’, *Politics and Society* 42, 1 (2014), pp. 29–50.

66 G. Bellefante, ‘With Participatory Budgeting, Think Local and Vote Local’, *New York Times*, 19 April 2015.

67 Therborn, *Cities of Power*, pp. 348, 357.

68 B. Russell, ‘Making power emerge: municipalism and the right to the city’, *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 74 (2020), pp. 95–111 (quotation on p. 101); H. Lefebvre, ‘The Right to the City’, in E. Kofman and E. Lebas (eds.), *Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 147–59.

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SOUTHERN TRAJECTORIES

17

Socialism, Zionism, and Settler Colonialism in Israel/Palestine

JOEL BEININ

A movement of Jews from the Russian Empire known as the first '*aliyah*' (1882–1903) established the first Zionist settlements in Palestine, then an imprecisely delimited region within the Ottoman province of Syria.¹ With the second '*aliyah*' (1904–14), socialist or labour Zionism began its ascent to hegemony over the Zionist movement and subsequently the State of Israel. Zionism sought to redefine Jews as a national, not a religious, community. While it deployed religious symbols and associations, it sought to transform traditional longing for Zion (Jerusalem) into a secular project. It was also a settler-colonial project. Until the Second World War, Zionists commonly referred to their 'colonization' of Palestine with no pejorative implications.

Early Zionists envisioned agricultural labour in the Land of Israel as revitalizing both the land, which they imagined as neglected, and the Jews who would work it. However, because they had no agricultural experience, first '*aliyah*' settlers soon became dependent on charitable grants and technical guidance from the French Baron Edmund de Rothschild. His agents adapted the Algerian colonial model and promoted viniculture plantations where Jews employed experienced Arab agricultural workers who accepted lower wages than immigrant Jews. Jews who later entered the citrus sector, already developed by local Arabs, similarly recruited Arab labour.

¹ Zionists call a wave of immigration to Palestine/Israel an '*aliyah*' (pl. '*aliyot*'). The Hebrew word means 'ascent' and is the term used for going up to the dais to recite a blessing over a portion of the weekly reading of the Torah. The pre-state '*aliyot*' are: first (1882–1903); second (1904–14); third (1919–23); fourth (1924–8); fifth (1929–39); and subsequently the illegal '*aliyah bet*'.

The Labour Settlement Movement

Second 'aliyah settlers and their supporters in the diaspora rejected the first 'aliyah settlement model. To secure work for Jews at wages adequate to sustain a European standard of living, they sought to split the labour market and exclude non-Jews from the Jewish economy. The Jewish National Fund, established in 1901, furthered this objective by purchasing land for the exclusive use of Jews. This new settlement strategy was politically based on a synthesis of socialism and Zionism. Socialist Zionists reasoned that if Jews did not employ Arab labour, then by definition they were not exploiters.

Between 1901 and 1906 branches of Po'alei Tziyon (Workers of Zion) were established in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Po'alei Tziyon adopted a synthesis of Marxism and Zionism which was most clearly formulated by Ber Borochov, a leader of the Ukrainian Po'alei Tziyon branch. Borochov himself never reached Palestine.

In 1907, second 'aliyah settlers established a branch of Po'alei Tziyon in Palestine. Two years earlier, another group of second 'aliyah settlers had formed the non-Marxist, Tolstoyan-influenced ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir (the Young Worker). These two parties and their successors led the Labour Settlement Movement (LSM), the current within Zionism that believed that the project could succeed only by building a strong Jewish working class in Palestine.²

Po'alei Tziyon split over support for the 1917 Russian Revolution. In 1919, the Palestinian branch of the party's right wing, which opposed the Bolsheviks, became Ahdut ha-'Avodah (Unity of Labour). Its leaders included David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, and Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, its second president. Most of Ahdut ha-'Avodah abandoned Marxism well before 1930, when it fused with ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir to form Mapai (the Workers' Party of the Land of Israel, after 1948, the Workers' Party of Israel). Mapai and its historic components subordinated class struggle to the necessity of maintaining an alliance with wealthy Zionist and non-Zionist Jews outside Palestine, who supplied most of the capital for the Zionist project, and the British government, which shielded the Zionist *yishuv* (settlement) from Palestinian Arab opposition.

Left Po'alei Tziyon supported the Bolshevik revolution and opposed the 'bourgeois' Zionist Organization. In 1920, it split from the mother party over these issues, hoping to join the Comintern. As Left Po'alei Tziyon continued to advocate 'Proletarian Zionism' its application was rejected. Nonetheless, it

2 The term Labour Settlement Movement is drawn from G. Shafir and Y. Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

refused to rejoin the Zionist Organization until 1937. Left Po'alei Tziyon favoured Yiddish language and culture, which was associated with the east European Jewish working class, whereas most Zionists favoured revitalizing Hebrew, the language of the Israelite biblical kingdoms, to assert the continuous Jewish connection to the Land of Israel. Consequently, Left Po'alei Tziyon was a minor current in Palestinian Zionism.

In 1922, a faction of Left Po'alei Tziyon established the anti-Zionist Palestine Communist Party (PCP). When the PCP became a section of the Comintern in 1924 it had no Arab members. The Comintern directed the party to territorialize and Arabize itself.³ Cultural and political differences between formerly Zionist European Jewish settlers and indigenous Palestinian Arabs led to recurrent splits that weakened Palestinian and Israeli communism.

The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 committed the British government to promote the 'establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'. The League of Nations endorsed that vague pledge and awarded the Mandate for Palestine to Britain in 1922. The Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization and subsequently the Jewish Agency for Palestine, established in 1929, became the representative and manager of a semi-autonomous settler colony (the *yishuv*) protected by the British Empire. Therefore, communists, the Jewish-socialist Bund, and many other socialists considered Zionism an ally of British imperialism, *tout court*.

By the 1920s, the LSM had established itself as the vanguard of the Zionist project. Its adherents established most of the economic, social, cultural, political, and military institutions that transformed Palestine into the State of Israel. The non-socialist leadership of the Zionist Organization had no choice but to support the LSM. Its adherents were the principal social force with the ideological commitment and élan required to settle Jews without means in an overwhelmingly Arab country with limited economic opportunities. Therefore, the implicit premise of Zionist settlement in Palestine, until the rise of fascism in Europe quickened Jewish immigration, was 'a practical alliance between a settlement movement without settlers and a workers' movement without work'.⁴

The central institution of the LSM was the General Organization of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel (after 1948, in Israel), known as the Histadrut, established in 1920. The Histadrut was much more than a national

3 M. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919–1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), pp. 7–9.

4 Quoted in G. Shafir, *Land, Labour, and the Origins of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 198.

Jewish trade union centre. As a self-described 'state in the making', it operated medical clinics, a health insurance programme, a bank, an insurance company, industrial and construction firms, urban and inter-urban bus co-operatives, an agricultural marketing co-operative, a newspaper, a publishing house, a theatre troupe, sports clubs, and, most decisively for the state-building project, a militia (whose origins date to 1908, which became the Haganah and the Palmach). Collective agricultural settlements known as *kibbutzim* were the salient symbol of socialist Zionism, along with less rigidly organized co-operative settlements known as *moshavim*. Both these forms of agricultural settlement were affiliated with the Histadrut.

Three slogans embodied the strategy of the LSM: Conquest of Labour (*kibush ha-'avodah*), Conquest of the Land (*kibush ha-aretz*), and (Jewish) Products of the Land (*tozeret ha-aretz*). This strategy entailed categorically anti-socialist practices, as a leading Mapai member regretfully recalled:

I remember being one of the first of our comrades to go to London after the First World War . . . There I became a socialist . . . When I joined the socialist students – English, Irish, Jewish, Chinese, Indian, African – we found that we were all under English domination or rule. And even here, in these intimate surroundings, I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism, to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union, the Histadrut; to defend preaching to housewives that they not buy at Arab stores; to defend the fact that we stood guard at orchards to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there . . . To pour kerosene on Arab tomatoes; to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash the Arab eggs they had bought; to praise to the skies the Keren ha-Kayemet [Jewish National Fund] that sent Hankin to Beirut to buy land from absentee effendis [landlords] and to throw the fellahin [peasants] off the land – to buy dozens of dunams [1 dunam = 1/4 acre] from an Arab is permitted, but to sell, God forbid, one Jewish dunam to an Arab is prohibited; to take Rothschild, the incarnation of capitalism, as a socialist and to name him the 'benefactor' – to do all that was not easy. And despite the fact that we did it – maybe we had no choice – I wasn't happy about it.⁵

Socialist Zionism and Arab Workers

Socialist Zionists devoted considerable energy to resolving the ideological contradiction between socialist internationalism and excluding Palestinian

5 'Speech to the Secretariat of Mapai', *Haaretz*, 15 November 1969, quoted in A. Bober (ed.), *The Other Israel: The Radical Case against Zionism* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), p. 12.

Arabs from the Jewish economy and the Histadrut. The official position of the leading parties of the Histadrut – Ahdut ha-‘Avoda and ha-Po‘el ha-Tza‘ir and subsequently Mapai – was that Arab and Jewish workers should organize in parallel national trade unions. But the Histadrut was often reluctant or lacked the capacity to assist Arab workers in forming their own unions.

An early test of the practice of socialist Zionism unfolded in the Haifa railway workshops, the largest concentration of wage labourers in Palestine. Before the First World War, most of the several thousand railway workers were Arabs employed by the Ottoman Palestine Railways concession. During the third *‘aliyah* (1919–23) more Jews began to seek work there. When the Histadrut was established, some 600 Jews organized in the Railway Workers Association joined *en bloc*.

Prompted by a wave of layoffs, in 1922 Arabs approached their Jewish colleagues about taking joint action. Due to the temporary local ascendancy of supporters of Left Po‘alei Tziyon, the only socialist Zionist party to favour organizing Arab workers directly into the Histadrut, as well as other Jews on their way to joining the PCP, which concurred with this view, the Railway Workers Association recruited Arabs into its ranks. By 1924, the national membership of the renamed and expanded Union of Railway, Postal, and Telegraph Workers (URPTW) was roughly half-Jewish and half-Arab. Arab union members repeatedly expressed discomfort that their membership card stated that the union was affiliated with the Histadrut. They considered the Histadrut’s ‘conquest of labour’ policy an obstacle to Arab–Jewish solidarity.

In January 1925, the URPTW council convened a meeting attended by Histadrut leaders David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi of Ahdut ha-‘Avoda and Haim Arlosoroff of ha-Po‘el ha-Tza‘ir. An Arabic-speaking Jewish union member intentionally mistranslated Ben-Gurion’s address, ‘because if I had translated what he said . . . 90 percent of the Arabs would have fled. He spoke in a very extreme way. From a Jewish standpoint it was excellent . . .’⁶ The Histadrut leaders pressured the Jewish members to retain the URPTW’s affiliation with the Histadrut. The railway authority management was also uneasy about a successful Arab–Jewish union. Consequently, by mid-1925 most of the Arabs had left the union.

Disappointed by the failed attempt at Arab–Jewish labour solidarity, Arab railway workers became the most important component of the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS, Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ummal al-‘Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya),

6 For a more detailed version of this story, see Z. Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 122–45, quote on p. 139.

founded in 1925 as an Arab national trade union federation. By the 1930s, PAWS represented several thousand workers.

Haim Arlosoroff's 1927 essay 'On the Question of Joint Organization' elaborated the theoretical basis for Histadrut policy towards Arab workers. Arlosoroff argued that allowing Arabs to work in the Jewish economy and join the Histadrut would depress wages below the level acceptable to European Jewish immigrants. Therefore, admitting Arabs to the Histadrut would undermine its Zionist mission of encouraging *'aliyah* and constructing the *yishuv*. Arlosoroff advocated that the Zionist project emulate the colour bar in South Africa, which he believed was the only comparable example of a settler colony with a large indigenous and a relatively small European population.⁷

In 1932, the Histadrut began to organize Palestinian Arab workers in the Palestine Labour League (Ittihad 'Ummal Filastin/Brit Po'alei Eretz Yisra'el). Eliyahu Agassi, a Mapai loyalist and native Arabic speaker who arrived in Palestine from Baghdad in 1928, led the effort. Agassi knew and respected Arab culture and engaged in his task with sincerity and skill. But he could not overcome the contradictions in the Histadrut's 'Conquest of Labour' policy.⁸

The Challenge of Palestinian Arab Nationalism

Palestinian Arabs resisted Zionist settlement as early as the 1880s. But a national movement emerged only after the First World War. The British Mandate authorities sought to divert it into Muslim communal concerns. In 1921, they appointed al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni to a new position they created – Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. The next year they created the Supreme Muslim Council and backed Husayni's ascendancy to its presidency. From 1921 until about 1933 the Mufti, as he was known, accepted the cautious political style of the Palestinian Arab notables and did not openly challenge British rule.

The 1929 Western Wall Uprising (*intifadat al-buraq*) initiated the radicalization of Palestinian politics – a response to increasing Jewish immigration, Arab land-owners' accelerating sales of land to Zionist agencies under financial pressure from the Great Depression, and peasants losing access to land. Educated youth formed the anti-imperialist Istiqlal (Independence) Party, while 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam established a militant Islamic movement based among workers and peasants in Haifa and the surrounding villages. Radicalized Palestinian nationalism erupted in the Great Arab Revolt of

7 Ibid., pp. 100ff. 8 Ibid., pp. 194–9.

1936–9, which targeted both British imperialism and the Zionist settlement project. The Mufti leveraged his Muslim institutional power to assert himself as head of the Arab Higher Committee, which nominally led the revolt. But in October 1937, hunted by the British, he fled Palestine; he returned only briefly to Egyptian-controlled Gaza in September 1948.

The PCP interpreted the Comintern's 'popular front' line as authorization to support the Arab Revolt, especially as after the Mufti went into exile it evolved into a peasant guerilla war with an anti-landlord spirit in addition to its anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist aspects. In effect, the party supported an armed struggle against the entire *yishuv* entailing many attacks on civilians. Many Palestinian Arabs welcomed this line, but most Jewish PCP members rejected it. To moderate internal ethnic frictions, the party formed a Jewish Section in 1937. This severely attenuated regular contacts between Arab and Jewish PCP members and intensified their political differences. In 1939, the Central Committee dissolved the Jewish Section because its leaders had argued that the 'popular front' line justified seeking alliances with 'progressive elements within Zionism'.⁹ Consequently, the PCP ceased to function as a coherent force. This internal theoretical debate barely affected the political life of either the *yishuv* or the Palestinian Arab community. However, the Jewish Section understood that demographic changes in the *yishuv* during the 1930s posed new political issues.

The 1931 British census of Palestine enumerated 175,936 Jews, less than 17 per cent of the population. During the fifth 'aliyah (1929–39) 250,000 Jews arrived in Palestine. Many of them were middle-class professionals and businesspeople fleeing antisemitism in eastern and central Europe who opposed socialist Zionism or were never Zionists at all. Some arrived with substantial capital or skills. Private capital comprised 84 per cent of total capital imports during 1930–7.¹⁰ By 1939, when the British White Paper limited further immigration, the Jewish population had reached 455,000, nearly 30 per cent of Palestine's population.¹¹ The combination of population growth and a more complex class structure prompted a debate among Marxists over whether or not the *yishuv* constituted a national community with the right to self-determination in Leninist terms.

9 Budeiri, *Palestine Communist Party*, pp. 88–126, quote on p. 113.

10 Y. Aharon, *The Israeli Economy: Dreams and Realities* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 66.

11 J. McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 35–7.

Mapai's Rightward Drift, Left Socialist Zionism, and Bi-Nationalism

As this demographic and social transformation was under way, in 1933 Mapai became the leading party in the entire Zionist movement. Ben-Gurion thus assumed the mantle of national leadership and sought to reorient Mapai 'from class to nation', as the title of one of his books put it.¹² To do so, he pursued an accommodation with Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of the Betar youth movement and the Revisionist Zionists, who demanded a Jewish state in both Palestine and Transjordan and forthrightly acknowledged that military force would be required to achieve and sustain it. Until the conclusion of the Italo-German treaty of 1936, Jabotinsky considered Mussolini an ideological partner. Some Betar members in Palestine proudly called themselves fascists, broke labour strikes, and may have murdered Haim Arlosoroff in 1933. Nonetheless, Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky initialled an agreement to regulate strikes, relations between labour and capital, and, by implication, relations between the two political forces. However, Histadrut members rejected the draft agreement in a March 1935 plebiscite.¹³

Labour militants in Tel Aviv and a majority of the kibbutzim of the United Kibbutz (ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uchad) federation led Mapai's internal opposition to the draft Ben-Gurion-Jabotinsky agreement. In 1942, these and allied forces coalesced as Mapai's Faction B. Opposition to Ben-Gurion in the ranks of the United Kibbutz posed a substantial threat because its kibbutzim supplied the bulk of the officer corps and were the principal bases of the Palmach, the clandestine elite strike force of the Haganah formed in 1941. Faction B also adamantly opposed partitioning Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. Ben-Gurion began considering this prospect favourably when it was proposed in the 1937 Peel Commission report, the British response to the Arab revolt.

Labour militancy, opposition to partition, and a desire to build a 'revolutionary' front to contest Mapai hegemony gradually coalesced as the basis of an uneasy alliance between Faction B and Hashomer Hatza'ir (the Young Guard), a youth and kibbutz movement that combined socialism, scouting, psychoanalysis, and intense loyalty to the collective. In 1927, four kibbutzim of Hashomer Hatza'ir established the National Kibbutz federation (ha-Kibbutz ha-Artzi ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir). Its founding platform advocated 'a

¹² *Mi-ma'amad le'am* (Tel Aviv: Ayyanot, 1955).

¹³ M. Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 176–82.

bi-national socialist society in Palestine and its environs'.¹⁴ The movement was then transitioning from anarcho-communalism to Marxism. In 1936, the National Kibbutz federation established an urban ally, the Socialist League of Palestine. By then it had adopted a pro-Soviet orientation, though it openly opposed the Soviet Union's anti-Zionism.

Until 1947 bi-nationalism was a current within Zionism supported by members of several parties, including Mapai, prominent professors at the Hebrew University, some Middle Eastern (Mizrahi) Jews, and leading bourgeois figures in the *yishuv* who employed Arabs in their enterprises. In October 1939, bi-nationalists established the League for Jewish–Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation. Hashomer Hatzair was wary of the League's non-socialist elements. Consequently, its representatives, including Aharon Cohen, the most prescient member of his movement on Arab affairs, participated only as observers. In 1941, the League appointed one of them, Mordechai Bentov of Kibbutz Mishmar ha-Emek, to chair a committee comprising supporters of several parties to prepare constitutional proposals for the future of Palestine. 'Bentov's book', as it became known, was intended as a secret draft report. It advocated a bi-national Arab–Jewish state in all of British Mandate Palestine with governmental parity between the two peoples.¹⁵

Ben-Gurion reviled 'Bentov's book'. At his urging, an Extraordinary Zionist Conference was convened at the Biltmore Hotel in New York in May 1942. The venue signified Ben-Gurion's conviction that following an Allied victory in the Second World War the United States would exercise more influence over the future of Palestine than the declining British Empire. The conference resolved that after the war 'Palestine [should] be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.'¹⁶ While still avoiding the term 'state', the Biltmore Programme replaced the Zionist Organization's previously vague goal of 'a Jewish National Home'. Ben-Gurion and his supporters understood that the prompt establishment of a Jewish state implied partitioning Palestine, which still had an overwhelming Arab majority.

Upon returning from the United States, Ben-Gurion leaked the contents of 'Bentov's book' and began publicly attacking it.¹⁷ Ben-Gurion made 'Bentov's

14 A. Cohen, *Israel and the Arab World* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1970), p. 302.

15 Committee on the Constitutional Development in Palestine, *Report*, Jerusalem, 1941.

16 'Declaration adopted by the Extraordinary Zionist Conference at the Biltmore Hotel of New York City, 11 May 1942', available at <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/o/f86e0b8fc540dedd85256ced0070c2a5>.

17 Cohen, *Israel and the Arab World*, p. 308.

book' into an emblem of Hashomer Hatza'ir. However, the movement had not discussed its contents and its principal leader, Me'ir Ya'ari, had not approved the text in advance. Ya'ari insisted that before Palestine became a bi-national state, Jews should first become a majority.¹⁸

In response to the Biltmore Conference and Ben-Gurion's offensive against bi-nationalism, Hashomer Hatza'ir gave its full organizational support to the League for Jewish–Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation. It established co-operative relations with the bi-nationalist intellectuals and bourgeois figures who formed Ihud (Unity) in 1942. But unlike Ihud and the bi-nationalist associations of the 1920s and 1930s, Hashomer Hatza'ir gave bi-nationalism a substantial social base. In the 1944 Histadrut elections the joint list of the National Kibbutz and Socialist League of Palestine received 20 per cent of the vote. In 1946, they formed the Hashomer Hatza'ir Workers Party of Palestine, which claimed 10,000 members, two-thirds of them kibbutz members.

The party charged Bentov with preparing a memorandum for the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry, which visited the country in 1946. *The Case for a Bi-National Palestine* built on his 1941 work.¹⁹ Among its key differences was advocating a bi-national state *after* extended international supervision and a Jewish majority had been established in Palestine, proposals that guaranteed minimal Arab support.

Mapai's Faction B sought to counter the threat of partition by reorganizing in 1944 as an independent party, the Unity of Labour Movement (ha-Tnu'ah le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah). In 1946, le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah federated with Left Po'alei Tziyon. Both parties were Marxist and critically pro-Soviet, but unlike le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah, Left Po'alei Tziyon favoured admitting Arab workers into the Histadrut (Figure 17.1).

Palestinian Communism and Arab and Jewish Workers

Before the Second World War, three trade union federations operated in Palestine: the Histadrut, which represented most Jewish workers; the Palestine Arab Workers Society, which became politically aligned with al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni with the appointment of Sami Taha as secretary-general in 1937; and the Histadrut-sponsored Palestine Labour League, which had only limited influence. By 1944, there were some 100,000

18 A. Halamish, *Kibbutz, Utopia and Politics: The Life and Times of Meir Yaari 1897–1987*, trans. L. Schramm (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017), p. 147.

19 Executive Committee of the Hashomer Hatza'ir Workers' Party, Tel Aviv, 1946.

Palestinian Arabs in the wage labour force, their numbers recently swelled by the wartime needs of the British military. There were also older concentrations of Arab workers at the port and Consolidated Refineries in Haifa and in other public and private sector establishments. The newly enlarged Arab working class propelled the growth of the PAWS. In 1942, it claimed some 5,000 members. Guided by the popular front strategy, the PCP leadership directed its Arab members to work within the PAWS despite Sami Taha's allegiance to the Mufti. Communists soon emerged as leaders of the Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Nazareth PAWS branches.

Concurrently, Bulus Farah, a former PCP Central Committee member expelled in 1940 for 'nationalist deviations', convinced some Arab members to disregard the party line and create an independent communist-led trade union centre. In 1942, they established the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labour Societies (FATULS, Ittihad al-Niqabat wa'l-Jam'iyyat al-'Arabiyya) and soon recruited some 1,000–1,500 workers in Haifa's port and petroleum sector and the British military camps. Hence, by 1943, communists led about 20 per cent of the organized Arab working class.²⁰

Threatened by the growth of Arab trade unionism beyond its control, the Histadrut began competing with the PAWS to represent both Arab and Jewish workers in the British military camps. Without co-ordinating with the PAWS, on 10 May 1943 the Histadrut called a strike of military camp workers, seeking a cost-of-living allowance that regular government workers had previously received. The PAWS leaders considered the Histadrut action a political challenge. It called on Arab workers not to strike, and most did not. PCP General Secretary 'Musa' (the nom de guerre of Radwan al-Hilu) and the few remaining Jewish party members loyal to him advocated that Arab workers join the strike because the party encouraged co-operation between Arab and Jewish workers on economic issues. But some Arab party members joined the PAWS in urging Arab workers not to strike.

This dispute was the proximate cause of the PCP's final split along national lines. Musa opposed a split but could not mobilize sufficient Arab or Jewish support to prevent it and withdrew from political life. The circle under Bulus Farah's influence provoked the split by distributing an Arabic leaflet describing the PCP as 'a national Arab party in whose ranks there are Jews who accept its national programme'.²¹ Mutual recriminations and expulsions destroyed what little remained of the PCP as a coherent organization.

²⁰ Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, pp. 284–6.

²¹ Budeiri, *Palestine Communist Party*, p. 164.



Fig. 17.1 Jewish workers appeal to Arab workers for unity, May Day 1947. (National Photo Collection of Israel, photograph by Hans H. Pinn, Israeli Government Press Office.)

In September 1943, the young intellectuals who followed Farah and others met in Haifa and decided to form an all-Arab party, the National Liberation League (NLL, 'Usbat al-Taharrur al-Watani). The NLL programme focused on the Palestinian Arab national struggle for independence from British imperialism and did not mention socialism or Arab–Jewish unity. Its social base consisted principally of young, mostly Christian, intellectuals from families that did not have high social status and left trade unionists – the FATULS and the left wing of the PAWS. A dispute between Sami Taha and the left in the PAWS in 1945 over representation at the founding congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions resulted in a split and the formation of the Arab Workers' Congress (AWC, Ittihad al-'Ummal al-'Arab), which united the PAWS left and FATULS.

By 1947, Taha was becoming reluctant to subordinate his union to the Arab Higher Committee, still nominally led by al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni from exile. Taha began vaguely to embrace socialism and to speak about an Arab labour party, perhaps on the British model. He was assassinated in November 1947, most probably on al-Husayni's instructions.²²

22 Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, pp. 341–2.

The AWC claimed 20,000 members and established itself as the leading Arab trade union federation in Jaffa, Gaza, Jerusalem, and Nazareth. In Haifa, it challenged the historic primacy of the PAWS. Two AWC leaders, Fu'ad Nassar and Khalil Shanir, the former heads of the PAWS branches in Nazareth and Jaffa, respectively, joined the NLL central committee.

Communists, Socialists, and the Partition of Palestine: 1947–1948

By 1946, when all the Anglo-French mandated territories of the former Ottoman Empire except Palestine had become independent, Arabs comprised two-thirds of Palestine's population (1,340,000) and Jews a third (640,000). Had Palestine then become independent, the Arab majority would have insisted on halting further Jewish immigration. This was unacceptable to prevailing Western opinion. Even among non-Zionists, establishing a Jewish state in Palestine was considered a form of compensation for the mass murder of European Jewry, an insurance policy against a recrudescence of fascist antisemitism, the best foil to British imperialism in the Middle East, or a way to reduce pressure to admit the 250,000 Jews in European displaced persons camps to the United States. Weighed against these considerations, Palestinian Arab national claims were suspect because the Mufti had collaborated with the Nazis during the war, because Zionists had persuaded many Westerners that there was no Palestinian Arab nation, and because Protestant theology maintained that Jews were eternally the rightful owners of the land.

In February 1947, Britain announced that it would leave Palestine and abandon its mandate by 15 May 1948. As the successor to the League of Nations, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) appointed a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and charged it with making recommendations for the future of the country.

Until the formation of UNSCOP, the Soviet Union and the international communist camp, including the pre-1943 PCP and NLL, upheld the line of Lenin and the Comintern: Zionism was an ally of imperialism; there was no worldwide Jewish people; and the *yishuv* was a settler colony imposed on the indigenous Palestinian Arabs by British imperialism and consequently had no right to national self-determination. However, the NLL advocated that Jews should have equal civic, but not national, rights in an independent Palestine.

In 1944, Jews who had split from the PCP reformed the party under their leadership. The following year the ninth party congress resolved that

Palestine was a 'country with a binational character' and called for the establishment of a 'democratic and independent Arab-Jewish state'.²³ This formulation recognized the *yishuv* as a national community and advocated a form of bi-nationalism. But this was not a Zionist position because it did not recognize a worldwide Jewish people or promote *'aliyah*.

Emile Tuma, representing the NLL, and Shmuel Mikunis, representing the PCP, presented their parties' divergent positions at the February–March 1947 Conference of the Communist Parties of the British Empire in London, the first time the NLL openly identified with the international communist movement. The sister parties unsuccessfully tried to reconcile their differences, but the Soviet Union soon settled the disagreement in its own terms.

On 14 May 1947, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko addressed the UNGA and acknowledged the 'exceptional sorrow and suffering' of the Jewish people during the war. He excoriated the west European states for their inability 'to ensure the defence of the elementary rights of the Jewish people and to safeguard it against the violence of the fascist executioners'. This, he argued, 'explains the aspirations of the Jews to establish their own State. It would be unjust not to take this into consideration and to deny the right of the Jewish people to realize this aspiration.'²⁴ The Soviet Union preferred establishing a single Arab-Jewish state with equal rights for both peoples. However, should this prove unfeasible, it would consider partitioning Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state.

The majority proposal of the UNSCOP report of 3 September 1947 favoured partition with an international *corpus separatum* in the Jerusalem–Bethlehem area (Map 17.1). The minority proposal favoured a federal union. On 13 October 1947, Soviet UN delegate Semyon Tsarapkin announced that the Soviet Union supported partition. Although it had previously rejected the UNSCOP majority proposal, the PCP abruptly reversed itself and renamed itself the Communist Party of the Land of Israel (ha-Miflagah ha-Komunistit ha-Eretz Yisra'elit), the first time communists adopted the Zionist name for the country.²⁵ The NLL was sharply split on this question. It first sought to maintain an independent position from the Soviet Union. But after the UNGA adopted Resolution 181 favouring the partition of Palestine on

23 'Hachlatot ha-ve'ida ha-ix shel ha-miflaga ha-komunistit ha-falestina'it', *Kol ha-'Am*, 23 September 1945.

24 Remarks by Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko to the UN Special Committee on Palestine, 14 May 1947, Documents A/307 and A/307/Corr. 1, available at <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/o/D41260F1132AD6BE052566190059E5Fo>.

25 Budeiri, *Palestine Communist Party*, pp. 172–3.

29 November 1947, a slim majority of the NLL Central Committee endorsed partition. Opponents of partition, led by Tuma, were expelled.²⁶ An ideological reassessment recognizing the right of national self-determination for both national communities in Palestine and consequently the legitimacy of partition permitted the reunification of Jewish and Arab communists in the Communist Party of Israel (Maki, ha-Miflagah ha-Komunistit ha-yisra'elit) in October 1948.²⁷

In the summer of 1947 the Hashomer Hatza'ir Workers Party initiated unity talks with le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah–Left Po'alei Tziyon. While their positions were close on questions of Marxism and class struggle and support for the Soviet Union, the three left socialist Zionist parties had historically differed on 'the Arab question'. Le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah's claim to national legitimacy was its leading role in the Palmach. Its younger members had made their mark fighting Arabs. It had always insisted that all of Palestine was the Jewish homeland and did not devote much thought to the fate of its Arab population. Left Po'alei Tziyon tended to minimize the national question. It had recruited perhaps two dozen Arabs into the party. The disproportionately influential left wing of Hashomer Hatza'ir advocated orthodox Marxism–Leninism and sought to restrict its differences with the international communist movement to the Jewish national question. They believed that the Soviet Union's anti-Zionism was a 'mistake' and hoped to persuade the communist world that they, not Maki, were the 'true communists' of Israel. Some left wingers, like Aharon Cohen, had been among the leading proponents of bi-nationalism. But Soviet support for partition provided an alibi for all of Hashomer Hatza'ir to abandon bi-nationalism and support partition. In January 1948, the three parties joined to form Mapam (the United Workers Party), in which Arabs were not accepted as full members.

Although President Truman initially favoured a bi-national Palestine, Zionist lobbying convinced him to extend *de facto* recognition to Israel immediately after it proclaimed independence on 14 May. The Soviet Union extended *de jure* recognition three days later. Thus, the aftershocks of the mass murder of European Jewry, opposition to British imperialism, Zionist political influence in the United States, and scepticism about the viability of ethnically 'mixed states' forged a rare Cold War consensus for creating a Jewish state.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 233–4.

²⁷ J. Beinín, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab–Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 48–55.

During the Arab–Israeli War of 1948, members of Hashomer Hatzza'ir, none more so than Aharon Cohen, now head of Mapam's Arab Department, knew that Israeli forces were expelling large numbers of Palestinian Arabs from the country.²⁸ Many Mapam-affiliated officers ordered and carried out expulsions, and Mapam-affiliated kibbutzim divided the agricultural lands of expelled villagers among themselves. Cohen foresaw that 'a state based on national enmity and the rule of one people over another will certainly breed chauvinism and reaction in its internal life' and ultimately ally with imperialism in the international arena.²⁹

Socialist Zionism in the State of Israel

Nonetheless, international left and liberal opinion overwhelmingly supported establishing a Jewish state. Many expected that Israel would be a socialist country. Trotskyists were the only organized tendency that persevered in opposing Zionism and the partition of Palestine.³⁰ In early 1948 Czechoslovakia, encouraged by the lobbying of Mapam and Jewish communists, began supplying arms to the Haganah, an essential element in Israel's victory in the 1948 War.³¹ Mapam leader Ya'akov Chazan was so impassioned by the Soviet Union's contribution to Israeli statehood that he proclaimed it 'the second homeland of the Jewish people'.³²

There were reasons to believe that Israel was on a socialist trajectory. The kibbutz-based Palmach led Israel to victory in the 1948 War. In 1948–50, kibbutz members comprised about 5.5 per cent of Israel's population and half the Jewish agricultural population. Moshav members constituted a majority of the other half. In 1948 some 40 per cent of all Jews belonged to the Histadrut. Mapam won 19 of the Knesset's 120 seats in the January 1949 elections, the second-largest bloc after Mapai's 46 seats – an absolute majority for socialist Zionist parties, with another 4 seats for Maki.

Jewish labour militancy continued into the early 1950s, most dramatically expressed in the 43-day seamen's strike of November–December 1951. The strike developed into a broad challenge to the Haifa Labour Council, a central node of Mapai's entire political machine. Mapam and Maki supported the

28 B. Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 58–80, 83–102.

29 A. Cohen, 'Nokhah hapinui ha-'aravi', *Le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah*, 1 June 1948, p. 45.

30 'The Trotskyist Position in Palestine', *Fourth International* 9, 3 May 1948, pp. 86–9.

31 A. Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947–1953* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), pp. 77–8.

32 *Divrei ha-Knesset* 1, 10 March 1949, p. 125.

dissident seamen. Two strike leaders, Mapam left wingers Nimrod Eshel and Akiva Orr, ultimately joined Maki.³³

However, Israel's political economy developed on a decidedly anti-socialist basis and tied it firmly to the West. The expropriation of the property of the roughly 750,000 Palestinian Arabs who fled or were expelled by Israeli forces during the 1948 War from the territory that became the State of Israel constituted a form of primitive capital accumulation. Israel's population more than doubled between 15 May 1948 and the end of 1951. Of the 684,000 new immigrants, some 250,000 lived in houses formerly owned by Arabs. By 1954 over one-third of Israel's Jewish population lived on absentee Arab property. The Absentee Property Law of 1950 defined nearly half of Israel's 165,000 Arab citizens as 'present-absentees', meaning that they lost their homes and lands because they had temporarily moved away from them during the 1948 War. This enabled the Custodian of Absentee Property to expropriate about 40 per cent of their lands. Altogether the Israeli state confiscated over 1 million acres of cultivable land from absent, present, and 'present-absent' Palestinian Arabs, increasing the land available to Jewish farmers by 250 per cent. The UN Refugee Office estimated the value of abandoned Arab real and moveable property at nearly £120 million, more than Israel's total domestic capital formation from 1949 to 1953.³⁴

Until 1948, kibbutzim had limited access to land and cultivated an average of less than 8 acres per family; by 1952 the average rose to almost 22 acres.³⁵ Most of the increase was due to seizure of Palestinian Arab lands. By 1955, two-fifths of all the kibbutzim of Hashomer Hatza'ir were located on lands beyond the boundaries of the Jewish state as defined by UNGA 181.

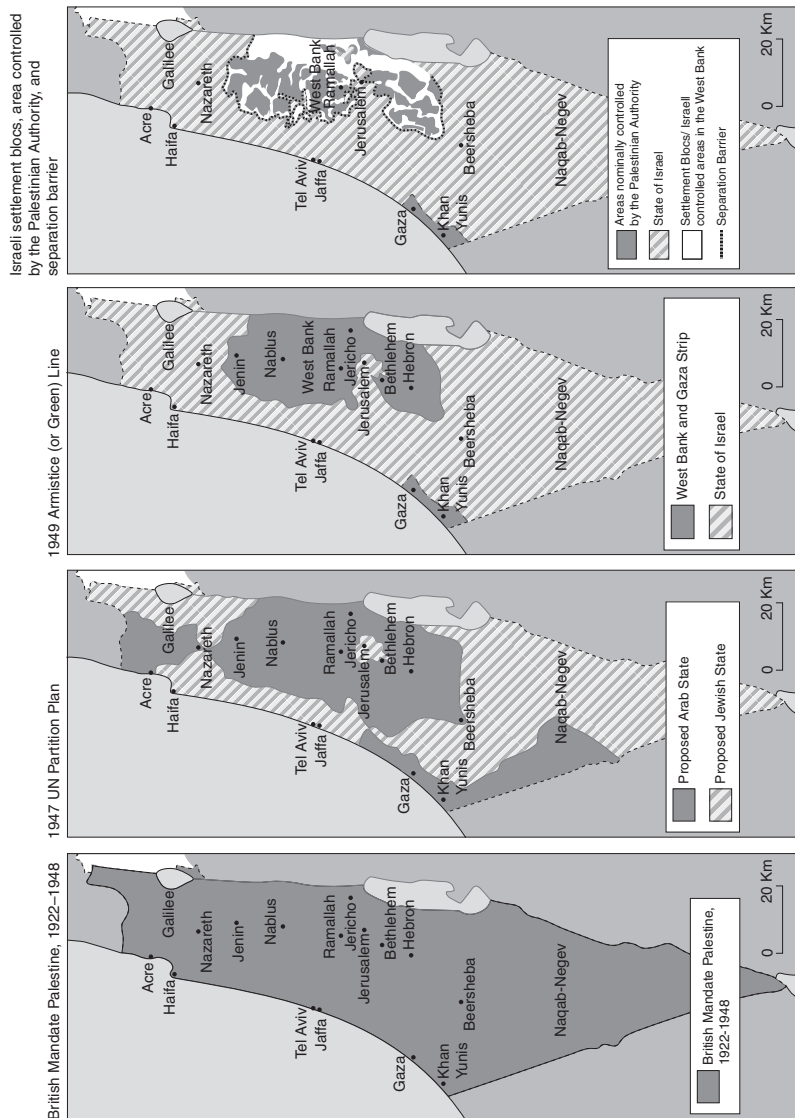
A military government in force from 1949 to 1966 administered the continuing expropriation, expulsion, and domination of Israel's Palestinian Arab citizens.³⁶ The government banned the Arab Workers Congress, which had barely survived the 1948 War, before allowing Palestinian Israelis to join the trade unions of the Histadrut in 1952. Many were nonetheless excluded from membership and denied employment on that basis. Not until 1965 did Palestinian Arab citizens vote in Histadrut elections as full members.

33 Beinin, *Red Flag*, pp. 73–5.

34 Statistics based on D. Peretz, *Israel and the Palestine Arabs* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1958), pp. 140–7.

35 E. Kanovsky, *The Economy of the Israeli Kibbutz* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 34.

36 S. Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).



Map 17.1 Palestine and Israel, 1922–2022

During its first two decades of existence, Israel's economic development was financed primarily by about \$7.5 billion of imported capital. Some 70 per cent of this capital consisted of unilateral transfers requiring no commercial return: donations from world Jewry, reparations and personal restitution for Nazi war crimes from West Germany, and small grants from the US government. Another 15 per cent consisted of sales of Israel bonds, a concessionary investment as they are mostly illiquid. The United States was the most important source of unilateral transfers in the form of donations and bond purchases from its Jewish community.³⁷ Mapai-controlled institutions – the government and the Histadrut – managed the disbursement of most of this imported capital and employed over 40 per cent of the labour force.³⁸

Prime Minister Ben-Gurion unremittingly attacked left socialist Zionism and pro-Sovietism. He disbanded the Palmach even before the 1948 War was concluded. Most senior Palmach officers resigned from the army, and Ben-Gurion loyalists took their places. After the 1949 Knesset election, Ben-Gurion elected not to form a socialist Zionist coalition and excluded Mapam from the government. In May 1950, the Histadrut left the communist-led World Federation of Trade Unions, and on 2 July 1950 the Knesset voted to support the US intervention in Korea, both positions strongly opposed by Mapam and Maki. Ben-Gurion denounced the seamen's strike as a Soviet-inspired political plot against the Jewish state.³⁹

Faced with Ben-Gurion's unyielding anti-communism, the Marxist–Leninist elements in Hashomer Hatzair advocated closer collaboration between Mapam and Maki. In limited situations, like the seamen's strike and the Israel–USSR Friendship League, this transpired. But late Stalinist anti-semitism undermined the credibility of the Mapam left. In November 1952, one of its prominent figures, Mordechai Oren, was arrested and convicted in an antisemitic show trial in Prague. This provoked a split in Mapam. Left-wingers led by Moshe Sneh were expelled for opposing the party leadership's condemnation of the Prague trial. They formed the Left Socialist Party, which endured less than two years before Sneh and several hundred followers joined Maki in October 1954.

While Sneh's relatively small faction of Mapam moved to the left, the Oren trial and the 1952–3 Moscow 'doctors' plot' discredited the leftists who

37 N. Halevi and R. Klinov-Malul, *The Economic Development of Israel* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 298; Israel, Prime Minister's Office, Economic Planning Authority, *Israel Economic Development*, Jerusalem, 1968, pp. 168–9.

38 Bein, *Red Flag*, pp. 71–2.

39 Ibid., p. 74; N. Eshel, *Shvitat ha-yama'im* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1994).

remained in Mapam and ultimately the party as a whole. The le-Ahdut ha-'Avodah faction of Mapam and part of Left Po'alei Tziyon rejected Hashomer Hatza'ir's residual pro-Sovietism as well as its demand to admit Arabs into the party. In August 1954, they left Mapam and resumed their pre-1948 name as an independent party identified with security hawkishness and aspirations to conquer the rest of the Land of Israel.

'Activism' and the End of Socialist Zionism

During the early years of Israel's existence Palestinian Arab refugees commonly crossed the border – to visit family, retrieve property, or commit acts of terror and sabotage. In response, Israel adopted an aggressive policy of disproportionate retaliation and even provocation known as 'activism'. The principal architects and implementers of activism were Ben-Gurion's protégés in the military establishment: Moshe Dayan (chief of staff, 1953–8); Shimon Peres (Director General of the Ministry of Defence, 1953–9); and Ariel Sharon (commander of the units tasked with retaliation, 1953–6). Sharon was raised on a moshav in a family of Mapai supporters and served in the Haganah before becoming a symbol of the right in his later years. In 1954, Peres negotiated a secret agreement with France to supply Israel with tanks, aircraft, and nuclear expertise. The activists advocated a 'second round' in which they hoped to expand Israel's territory.⁴⁰

In July 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers overthrew the Egyptian monarchy. As the leader of a group of military officers humiliated by their defeat in Palestine in 1948, Nasser needed to rebuild Egypt's army. But he sought to avoid a war with Israel and to curb Palestinian commandos operating from the Gaza Strip. A particularly bloody Israeli retaliation raid on Gaza's police station in February 1955 rendered Nasser's restraint untenable.

In the July 1955 Knesset elections, le-Ahdut ha-Avodah–Left Po'alei Tziyon, which had been a minority in united Mapam, won ten seats, while Mapam, now comprised primarily of Hashomer Hatza'ir, won nine. During coalition negotiations, as cross-border clashes intensified, le-Ahdut ha-Avodah demanded a preventive war against Egypt. Mapam opposed this, but nonetheless joined Ben-Gurion's government with le-Ahdut ha-Avodah.

In September 1955, Nasser announced that Egypt would purchase arms from Czechoslovakia. Dayan immediately proposed a preventive war. But

40 B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

Ben-Gurion insisted on evidence of Egyptian aggressive intentions convincing to the West before he would agree.

That became unnecessary when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956. Nasser's audacity unhinged the governments of Britain, which owned the largest block of shares in the Suez Canal Company, and France, where the corporation was registered. France was additionally irritated by Nasser's support for the Algerian National Liberation Front, which had launched an armed struggle for independence in 1954.

France convinced Britain to include Israel in their plan to attack Egypt. Each party's role was specified in the Protocol of Sèvres. Israel initiated hostilities on 29 October 1956, followed by an Anglo-French invasion to 'protect' the Suez Canal. By the end of the Sinai/Suez War on 6 November, Israel occupied all of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Despite having opposed a preventive war, Mapam fully supported the war effort and demanded that Israel reject US and Soviet pressures to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian–Israeli Peace as a Successor Project to Socialism

In 1962, a few dozen mostly Jewish members left Maki and established the 'Israeli Socialist Organization', commonly known by the name of its newspaper, *Matzpen* (*Compass*). *Matzpen* embraced Marxism, the Cuban Revolution, and other Third World anti-imperialist struggles. But it was critical of the Soviet Union. *Matzpen* was the first Israeli socialist organization to propose that Israel was a settler colonial society in which the Jewish working class could not be a revolutionary force.⁴¹

Related issues led to a more severe schism in Maki in 1965, mostly along national lines. The Arab party members and a small number of Jews saw the Arab regimes aligned with the Soviet Union (Egypt, Syria, Iraq) as the leading anti-imperialist force in the Middle East. An all-Jewish faction inclined to seek co-operation with Mapam despite its rightward drift opposed that view. Led by Shmuel Mikunis and Moshe Sneh, they retained the party name. The mostly Arab faction, led by Me'ir Wilner and Tawfiq Tubi, became the New Communist List (*Rakah*).

The Arab–Israeli War of 1967 war reshaped Israel's political map. The historic components of Mapai reunited to form the Labour Party in 1968. The

41 H. Hanegbi, M. Machover, and A. Orr, 'The class nature of Israeli society', *New Left Review* 65 (1971), pp. 3–26.

following year Mapam formed an electoral Alignment (Ma'arach) with the Labour Party, all but liquidating its independent political perspective. The Labour and Alignment governments of 1967–77 authorized or turned a blind eye to the establishment of settlements in the Arab territories Israel occupied during the war. The inability of labour Zionists to confront effectively the ascendant forces of the religio-nationalist right culminated in the demise of their hegemony over the Zionist movement and the State of Israel. The Likud came to power for the first time in 1977 and accelerated the settlement project.

During and immediately after the war, only Matzpen and Rakah opposed Israel's decision to attack its Arab neighbours, the annexation of East Jerusalem, and the establishment of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Rakah's steadfast loyalty to the Soviet Union prevented it from attracting Israeli Jews who became critical of Israel's post-1967 governments. Matzpen was part of the global new left of the 1960s and had some international connections. But its hard anti-Zionist stance and the splintering of the organization into Trotskyist and Maoist sects diminished Matzpen's attraction for all but the most disaffected young Israelis.

Siach (Israeli New Left), established in 1968, was also part of the global new left. Its founders were young members of Hashomer Hatza'ir kibbutzim studying at Tel Aviv University who opposed Mapam's rightward drift, former members of Maki who rejected Mikunis and Sneh's embrace of the Israeli national security consensus, previously unaffiliated Jewish university students radicalized by the upsurge of militaristic chauvinism following the 1967 War, and recent immigrants who brought their new left political sensibilities to Israel. Siach advocated peace agreements with Israel's Arab neighbours based on withdrawal from all the territories occupied in the 1967 War. Most members identified as socialists. But it eschewed adopting a formal political platform and focused on direct action.

All elements of the Israeli new left focused on attaining a just peace in the wake of the 1967 War, but they also engaged, albeit not very satisfactorily, with ethnic and gender issues.

Since their mass arrival in Israel in the 1950s, Jews from Muslim majority countries (Mizrahim) have been subjected to discrimination by the largely Ashkenazi (European) and labour Zionist ruling class.⁴² Some Iraqis supported Maki in the 1950s and other Mizrahim supported labour Zionist

42 O. Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

parties. But most identified the cause of their plight as 'socialism' or 'the left'. They became the core of the Likud's social base.

In 1971, groups of mostly Moroccan Jews established the Black Panther organization, provocatively named after the US revolutionary organization of the same era. The Panthers protested against the structures of Israeli Jewish society that combined class exploitation and ethnic oppression. But they had no formal political programme or ideology and were deeply divided over Zionism and the occupation – the issues that occupied the primarily Ashkenazi left. Nonetheless, members of Matzpen, Siach, and other leftists enthusiastically supported the Panthers.

As was the case globally, the Israeli new left milieu became an incubator for second-wave feminism. In the 1973 Knesset elections, many Zionist feminists, led by Marcia Freedman, a recent immigrant from the United States, supported the liberal Civil Rights Movement led by former Labour Party member Shulamit Aloni. Freedman clashed with Aloni and ultimately returned to the United States. Nonetheless, by the 1980s autonomous women's action comprised a major force in the Israeli peace movement. Among the many women's organizations opposed to Israel's continuing occupation of Arab territories are Women in Black, the Coalition of Women for Peace, and the anti-militarist New Profile. Their mostly middle-class, Ashkenazi character prompted the formation of the Mizrahi feminist Ahoti (My Sister).

In 1975, former Siach members and others reformed as Shasi (Israeli Socialist Left). Shasi was a non-Zionist, socialist organization critical of Soviet-style communism. Its most important contribution to Israeli politics was popularizing the idea that negotiating with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip alongside the State of Israel was the way to resolve the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Shasi endured until after the 1993 Oslo Accords, which appeared to herald the two-state solution it advocated.

Rakah also came to support the two-state solution. But it was totally isolated until, in 1977, it led the formation of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE). The DFPE included non-communist Arabs, a faction of the Black Panthers led by Charlie Biton, Shasi, and other Jews of the left. Subsequently, several of the non-communist elements, including Shasi, abandoned the DFPE over objections to Rakah's undemocratic practices. In 1989, years after the demise of the Mikunis–Sneh faction, Rakah reclaimed the Maki name.

The seizure of Palestinian lands during and after the 1948 War, Ben-Gurion's pro-Americanism and anti-communism, Stalinist antisemitism,

Israel's economic dependence on American Jewry and Germany, its military alliance with France, its collusion with the declining European imperial powers in the Middle East and North Africa, and its confrontation with Arab nationalism overdetermined the death of socialist Zionism as a practical project well before the 1967 War. However, the survival of kibbutzim and other institutions of the Labour Settlement Movement sustained labour Zionist discourse.

In 1985, a national unity government led by Prime Minister Shimon Peres adopted a neoliberal Economic Stabilization Plan that effectively buried labour Zionism. Many kibbutzim underwent privatization. Mainstays of social democracy like the Histadrut's network of clinics and health insurance were weakened. By 2014 Israel had become the fifth most unequal country in the OECD.⁴³ In the two 2019 elections, parties representing the legacy of labour Zionism – Labour and Meretz (in which the remnants of Mapam are a component) – were reduced to 10–11 Knesset seats out of 120.

In the 2015 and the September 2019 Knesset elections the DFPE joined with three other non-socialist Arab parties – the National Democratic Alliance, the Arab Movement for Renewal, and the United Arab List – to form the Joint List (al-Qa'ima al-Mushtaraka), which includes socialists, Islamists, and nationalists. The emergence of the Joint List as the third-largest Knesset faction highlights the transformation of the meaning of 'left' in post-1967 Israel. Since the 1990s, the term has mainly been associated with declarations of willingness (but not necessarily actions) to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards Palestinian Arabs in resolving the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and advocating full civil equality of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.

The demise of socialist Zionism parallels the decline of socialism in most of the world. Collective and co-operative agriculture and industries that once formed the core of the working class and its political movements have largely been replaced by military industries, high-tech, and 'security' firms, many linked to Silicon Valley and the US military–industrial complex, and a culture of individualism, wild capitalism, and support for the Israeli nationalist right. There is nothing resembling a traditional workers' movement on a significant scale. Zionist settler-colonialism and associated Israeli militarism account for most of the specificities of the Israeli experience.

Social movements, political coalitions, and non-governmental organizations opposing neoliberalism, colonial settlement and annexation of the West

43 C. Thévenot, 'Inequality in OECD countries', *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 45, S18 (2017), pp. 9–16, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1403494817713108>.

Bank and the Syrian Golan Heights, racialized oppression of Mizrahim and African migrant workers, discrimination against and sexual abuse of women, and Orthodox control over Jewish personal status and religious expression, and advocating for equality of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, LGBTQ rights, environmentalism and climate justice, and even labour rights persist and have registered occasional victories. They have contested the hegemony of the religio-nationalist right which began to emerge in 1977 and has been firmly entrenched since 2001. But they have failed to form a coherent political alternative, much less a historic bloc capable of overturning it.

Further Reading

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Socialism in India

MADHAVAN K. PALAT

Introduction

Socialism in India flourished in the space between communalism or the various religious nationalisms, but principally the Hindu species, and communism, and globally it would be recognizable as a variant of European social democracy or socialism located between conservatism and communism. It was a potent presence at the summit of Indian politics during the half century between the late 1920s and the late 1970s as groups clustered around Jawaharlal Nehru of Congress, which was both a party and a movement within the larger national movement for independence, as also around others like Jayaprakash Narayan, J. B. Kripalani, Ram Manohar Lohia, and Narendra Deva. They were both within Congress and therefore with the government after Independence in 1947 as much as in opposition.

The socialists believed it was possible to overcome capitalism democratically given the extraordinary record of Gandhian non-violent mobilizations over the three decades from the 1920s to the 1940s, and the universal suffrage introduced in India with the first general elections in 1952. In the political realm, they advocated pluralism, electoral democracy, and secularism. In economics they were oriented to welfare and the rational organization of production and distribution, as exemplified in planning but without making planning an article of faith; they were comfortable with private property but opposed the privileged land rights known as zamindari, and monopolies in industry; they placed a high value on both individualism and co-operative endeavour; and they promoted both advanced industrialization and cottage and small-scale industries. Socially they were egalitarian, by which they understood equality of opportunity rather than levelling, and to this end they were firmly committed to educational access and affirmative action; and culturally they were inclusive and pluralist. In global power struggles socialists demanded activism without allying with either side in the Second World

War or the Cold War, and they supported the strategy of non-alignment as formulated by Nehru to maintain Indian independence.

They were closest to the communists but the two could never merge, although many like Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash Narayan were Marxists for part or all of their adult lives. They saw eye to eye on the pursuit of full independence; the class struggle, mobilizing the masses, and social welfare; radical economic reforms and planning; affirmative action for lower castes; secularism and resolute opposition to communalism; and even parliamentary democracy in spite of revolutionary aspirations and occasional action by both. But their differences kept them permanently apart. Socialists were nationalists and regarded the communists with suspicion as a branch of the Third International. Ram Manohar Lohia even propounded, not wholly ironically, a 'Marxian law of civilization', by which the non-Western world 'must . . . play a dependent role alike in Marxist thought as in liberal thought'.¹ During the Second World War, Congress, including the socialists, were incarcerated for refusing to contribute to the war, but the Communist Party of India (CPI) fully participated when the Soviet Union entered the war in 1941. To Congress and the socialists this was an outright betrayal of the national cause. The CPI even supported the Pakistan demand leading to the partition of India, while Congress and the socialists opposed it, although they ultimately submitted to what seemed like fate. The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was a part of Congress and saw it as a mass national organization, but the CPI treated Congress as a bourgeois force against which they would compete through bodies like the Workers and Peasants Party and the League against Imperialism. The CSP sought united unionism while the CPI split the labour movement by creating unions subordinate to the party. In like fashion, they deplored the CPI dividing the socialist movement by claiming socialist purity for themselves and deriding all others.² Above all, they feared a communist dictatorship, with Gandhi likening the Third International to Chinggis Khan in its ambitions,³ and Narendra Deva dismissing the Soviet Union as an imperialist predator in eastern Europe.⁴ They had much in common, but they were separated by much more.

1 R. Lohia, 'International Aspect of Communism' (September 1948), in *Fragments of a World Mind* (Calcutta: Maitrayani, n.d.), pp. 52–3.

2 J. Narayan, 'From Socialism to Sarvodaya', 25 October 1957, in B. Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works* (hereafter JPNSW), vol. VII (1954–1960) (Delhi: Manohar, 2007), p. 234.

3 M. K. Gandhi, *My Socialism*, compiled by R. K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1959), p. 12.

4 Narendra Deva, 'The Socialists Prevented Perversion of Marxism' (1952), translated from the Hindi by A. Nauriya, *Janata*, 25 April 1993, p. 10.

Ideologies, Theories, Programmes

Their ideological priorities were equality, the individual in the community, creative labour, non-violence, revolution, and the independence of India; but, as may be expected, each of these was defined in numerous ways.

Egalitarianism was a principle generally accepted across the political spectrum by communists, socialists, and even Hindutva or Hindu nationalism. But communists created a hierarchy of 'consciousness', or, more simply, of communists and others. Similarly, Hindutva sought to erase caste, and V. D. Savarkar, its fount of ideology, campaigned vigorously against it; but it endorsed the class structure, and it ranked religions, with Hindus at the apex and Muslims at the base. The socialists repudiated the communist scale of 'consciousness' and the Hindutva one of religious community; like the communists and unlike Hindutva, they rejected class division also. But they freely accepted the grading of achievement and performance, much of which they ascribed to inherited advantage. They turned to equality of opportunity to overcome the problem of inequality by birth; affirmative action and education therefore seemed to them to be the obvious course to pursue; and Congress and the non-Congress socialists, through their sundry conflicts and compromises, were the torchbearers of equality understood thus. Inherited advantage was seen as due primarily to caste; and affirmative action has tended to be based on caste rather than on class, religious and ethnic community, or region. This is a peculiarly socialist position with which neither the communists nor Hindutva are comfortable, since caste fragments their ideal forms of solidarity, of class and religion, respectively.

In the socialist imagination, the individual and the collectivity were paired and of equal weight. In their liberalism, they placed the highest value on the individual through their discourse on rights with its corollary of individual fulfilment. Nehru was the exemplar in this respect. But as socialists they were committed to the collectivity also. However, with liberal anxiety about the 'yoke of opinion' and majorities generally, they turned to the co-operative as the form in which both the individual and the collectivity could flourish; but they repudiated Soviet forms of collectivism, especially the collective farm, which their critics on the right accused them of conspiring to insinuate into India. Communists, on the other hand, spurned co-operatives as merging classes and they accorded priority to the class over the individual; and Hindutva saw only the community, not the individual. Co-operatives remained an article of faith among all kinds of socialists, the Nehruvian, the Gandhian, and the Congress socialists; and they warmed to the panchayat or

the village council as a co-operative as much as an institution of village democracy, with the Gandhians like J. C. Kumarappa and Jayaprakash Narayan embracing it as a co-operative and the other socialists like Nehru nurturing it as the lowest rung of parliamentary democracy.

Gandhians valued community life and warned against co-operatives being absorbed into the structures of state, both bureaucratic and parliamentary. Jayaprakash Narayan was the chief campaigner in this domain. Drawing on Maurice Duverger and Salvador de Madariaga among others, he represented electoral democracy as a product of mass society with its lurking menace of totalitarianism. It was premised on the atomized individual and one man one vote, with that helpless creature at one end, the state at the other, and nothing in between. Power was exercised by competing mass parties commanded by oligarchies, along with parallel powerful interests like capitalists and unions. Their instrument of rule was the bureaucracy, soulless, sinister and pervasive, weighing heavily on the citizen. The remedy lay in communitarian existence and organizations at all levels from the village panchayat up through the district, the region, the province, to the nation and even the world. He imagined each community as integrated horizontally and vertically to others with power and initiative dispersed through them all. In his Rousseauian dream he saw individuals interacting and participating directly in units that were small enough for direct communication but weighty enough for their views to be registered. Both Nehru and he claimed that panchayats had flourished in ancient India although internally divided by class and caste. Just as Alexander Herzen and the Narodniks in Russia a century before had discerned the germ of socialism in the yet extant peasant commune, he found such panchayats live enough to be resuscitated to attain the socialist heights he expected of them. Invoking his socialist forebears, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, he clarified that this complex structure was in no way akin to parliamentary democracy, for it rested on the voluntary action of citizens at all levels and not on the state distributing socialist largesse through its gargantuan bureaucracies and projects. Following Vinoba Bhave, he distinguished the action as *lokniti*, or non-power politics, as against *rajniti*, or power politics; and he saw it as breathing the spirit of brotherhood, equality, and freedom, taking care, evidently, not to use the formula 'liberty, equality, fraternity'.⁵ Like so many other socialists, he

5 See his two tracts, J. Narayan, 'From Socialism to Sarvodaya', 25 October 1957, and 'A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity', 30 September 1959, in *JPNSW*, vol. VII, pp. 226–54 and 434–506, respectively.

found his own way to conflate revolutionary socialism with Gandhian sarvodaya.

Following well-established tradition, socialists regarded labour as an essential attribute of the human being and deplored the alienation of labour in capitalism. All socialists, especially the Gandhians, ceaselessly called for the practical experience of manual work, with Nehru routinely regretting the lack of it in the educational curriculum and exhorting students to expose themselves to it in villages. Surprisingly, Gandhians were more sensitive to the condition of alienated labour than their socialist comrades. Taking his cue from Gandhi, Kumarappa analysed the producer being reduced to an automaton on the assembly line, losing control over his time, not recognizing himself in the product of his labour, and his product being appropriated by others. Kumarappa was eloquent on this being a form of slavery with the means of production entirely owned or controlled by capitalists. He added that slaves knew only drudgery, slave-owners only pleasure, and both degenerated in consequence. Work, on the other hand, ensured both discipline and the pleasure of creation.⁶ In like fashion, Jayaprakash Narayan argued that a community could not cohere without work, that every adult (not merely males) had to be a worker, and that work must be creative not robotic.⁷ The Gandhians reverted to an older tradition in socialism through their concern with the drudgery of labour unlike the others who focused their attention on the power struggles between the classes in capitalism. Gandhians also went beyond capitalism to a critique of modern civilization, stressing the simple life, respect for the environment, and renewable sources of energy.

Ram Manohar Lohia attempted formal theory more than anybody else among the socialists, including Nehru, by focusing on the global asymmetry of power. To him it did not suffice to reject capitalism with its monster progeny, imperialism; he analysed capitalism and communism as partners in the dominion of the world, with Marxist theory assuming that the colonial world would necessarily follow in the wake of Europe. On this ground neither the Soviet Union nor the socialists of Europe had anything to offer. 'Imperial labour', or the workers of the metropolis, was both complicit in the exploitation of 'colonial labour' and ignored the colonial contribution to the accumulation of capital. The central contradiction was not merely between the socialized nature of production and the private appropriation of profit which was wholly internal to advanced capitalism and excluded the reality of

6 J. C. Kumarappa, *Gandhian Economic Thought* (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, n.d. [1951]).

7 Narayan, 'A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity', p. 482.

the rest of the world; the contradiction that he saw was between the imperial and the colonial, or, 'Capitalists and communists alike of West Europe have maintained a singular silence over this division of labour into imperial and colonial and the great consequences of this division to capitalist development through its various phases.'⁸ As the colonies had been essential to the development of capitalism, it was impossible to reproduce that pattern in the former colonies; any attempt to do so would, and did, lead to the creation of 'internal colonies'. Further, capital-intensive strategies resulted in high unemployment; and, finally, such vast projects demanded a high degree of centralization at the expense of local initiative. The answer lay not in replicating capitalist and Soviet communist development, as in the Nehruvian strategy, but in investing in the technologies, politics, and sociology appropriate to what he called 'small-unit production'. This would ensure labour-intensive production infused with modern technology suitable to local circumstances and making use of local knowledge. It entailed decentralization rather than the hyper-centralization of the advanced economies, village and community development, and active democracy at the four levels of village, district, state, and centre. He termed this the 'four-pillar state'. In short, democracy to the base, the people to be involved at every level, small-scale production, and decentralized management and administration. At the same time it did not seek village self-sufficiency nor did it privilege 'traditional' knowledge. It was Gandhian in inspiration; but it differed from Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan and agreed with Nehru by casting the state as the leader. Nehru spoke throughout with equal passion about panchayats and village democracy, village-level planning, rural industry, and co-operatives while warning against the danger of bureaucracy suffocating local initiatives; but Lohia suspected that Nehru's passion for the grand projects of irrigation, steel plants, and other such 'temples of modern India' would submerge all that was local.

Non-violence was a core value to all socialists, not only to Gandhians. This was different from their commitment to constitutional rectitude, democratic procedures, and faith in evolutionary socialism. Gandhi pressed for persuasion over coercion, with persuasion including non-cooperation and civil disobedience, and to be employed even for redistribution of land; but in anarchist fashion he argued that 'The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form',⁹ and the greater the centralization, the

8 Lohia, 'Economics after Marx', n.d., *Fragments of a World Mind*, p. 198.

9 Gandhi, *My Socialism*, ch. 10, p. 39.

greater the violence. He even argued that state ownership of property entailed greater violence than private property did, and hence trusteeship (the holding of property in trust) was preferable to state ownership. On these grounds he distanced himself from the socialists by describing socialism itself as violent, unfree, and dictatorial, although he claimed that he had been a socialist before socialism was heard of in India and that he was a communist to boot. The other socialists limited themselves to peaceful action without resorting to a virtually anarchist doctrine of anti-state non-violence; and while they preferred peaceful action, they did not rule out violence in extreme circumstances. Thus, Jayaprakash Narayan called for guerrilla movements during the Second World War, and Narendra Deva justified violence when faced with a 'fascist' government.

In spite of their non-violence, socialists considered themselves to be revolutionaries (the Gandhians were the exception here). By this they understood not a 'bourgeois apocalypse' like the Russian Revolution but a radical alteration of current power and class structures through democratic procedures. Although sceptical at times, they imagined that it was possible thanks to universal suffrage. After all, they were witness to both the collapse of the British Empire through non-violent action without even the benefit of universal suffrage and the futility of the communist insurrections in the late 1940s. But they, especially Nehru, conceived of revolution as that unending series of dramatic innovations and changes that had become the norm since the late eighteenth century, the perpetual revolution of modern times. Nehru did not imagine revolution as a single event but as a process without terminus. He warmly welcomed it as a condition of modernity, suffered no conservative anxieties about the inevitable instability of life, and was happy to call himself a revolutionary living in a revolutionary age. It also seemed wholly compatible with non-violence. But Lohia was an exception to this benign image. He was something of a wrathful Gandhi. He deplored Gandhi's principle of love as much as the communist one of hate: instead, he prescribed anger, a purifying anger against injustice, as the passion that must animate Asian socialism. He recommended pursuing the Gandhian goals of co-operation, decentralization, and the simple life, or Asian socialism, by methods that 'must be drastic instead of gradual, and unconstitutional though peaceful, whenever necessary'.¹⁰

They argued that Indian independence could be consummated only through socialism, just as Gandhi saw its culmination in his utopia, Ram

10 Lohia, 'An Asian Policy', n.d., *Fragments of a World Mind*, p. 250.

Rajya. Nehru theorized most elaborately on this subject and saw, with a degree of clarity that escaped most others except Lohia, the intimate relation between socialism and his strategy of non-alignment in international relations. In his argument, imperialism was a facet of global capitalism; and if India were to promote capitalist development it must further integrate itself into that same global capitalism. This would prolong her servitude, independence would be hollow, and imperialism would find means other than direct rule with which to dominate. He anticipated neo-colonialist theory, but did not call it such. As early as 1928 he gave the example of Bolivia, politically independent but wholly indebted and subservient to that centre of global capitalism, the United States.¹¹ The alternative to such subordination was for India to become, or aspire to become, an imperialist power. This was both fanciful and abhorrent to him. The only freedom from capitalism and its imperialist offspring lay in socialism. The Soviet Union was socialist, but that was another centre with globally hegemonic ambitions. The CPI of course advocated absorption in that socialism, or communism as it was called by non-communists; but Nehru trenchantly rejected that option. He was not fighting for independence from the British Empire to surrender it to either the Third International or the Soviet Union. His was the logic followed by the other socialists, be it Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, or Ram Manohar Lohia, and even Gandhi and his followers. Socialism to all of them was an ideology for sustaining independence and freedom from neo-colonial domination and communism, and to Gandhi, for an alternative possibility in modern civilization.

In pursuing the theme of an independent strategy for development, Lohia was equally vocal about foreign policy. The socialists and Gandhians generally endorsed Nehru's non-alignment, but Lohia took issue with him on it, following his radical instinct. Nehru always stressed that he was not working towards a non-aligned bloc of nations to compete with the two power blocs in the world. His ambition was to avoid blocs, not to create another one; and he hoped that a non-aligned group would soften the confrontation between the two power blocs and thereby expand the area of peace in the world. It was not neutrality since India and the non-aligned would be active in promoting peace, even if it be from a position of obvious weakness. He demonstrated what was possible by involving India in the diplomacy of the Korean War and subsequently in Indochina, and he always sent Indian contingents for UN

¹¹ 'The Changing Face of Imperialism', 21 July 1928, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (hereafter *SWJN*), 1st series, vol. 3, pp. 139–42.

peacekeeping purposes. Within the subcontinent he preferred to engage with both superpowers when dealing with Pakistan rather than play off one against the other, as this would only tend to harden the lines of difference between them, reinforce the Pakistani alliance with the West, and deepen global differences. Lohia, more than the other socialists, found fault with Nehru for not promoting a power bloc of the non-aligned to challenge the superpowers or to play one against the other. He assumed that the weak have strength in numbers and could exploit the differences among their oppressors, and he accused Indian socialists of failure to assume leadership.¹²

Socialist Factions and Parties

On these premises, socialists divided broadly into three groups. The first was the Congress left wing led effortlessly by Nehru from the late 1920s until his death in 1964. His most articulate and energetic companion-at-arms was Subhas Chandra Bose; but Bose has not left much by way of a *profession de foi*. However, he was a vigorous campaigner with the left for complete independence, rapid industrialization, planning, drastic land reforms, mobilization of peasants and workers, village democracy and panchayats, the breaking up of the caste system, and for India to be active globally. But he also championed a powerful central government, a strong ruling party with military discipline, the 'ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities', and even a dictatorship for the transition 'to put India on her feet'. He considered these features to be common to communism and fascism and expected India to work out an effective synthesis of the two, on which he bestowed the name 'Samyavada', meaning equality or synthesis.¹³ He provided a forceful impetus to the idea of planning when he was president of Congress in 1938 by appointing a planning committee headed by Nehru, which eventually evolved into the Planning Commission after independence. Nehru was with him on most of these issues except the penchant for dictatorship, the repression of minorities, and the fusion of fascism and communism. Both retained their socialist fervour but on opposite sides during the Second World War, Bose with the Axis in order to overthrow British rule in India, and Nehru and Congress boycotting the war effort even as they ideologically identified with the Allies.

12 Lohia, 'Some Fundamentals of a World Mind', September 1949, *Fragments of a World Mind*, pp. 19–20.

13 S. Ch. Bose, *Netaji Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, n.d.), pp. 349–52.

The other socialist trend was overtly more radical in action than Nehru's was but no different in theory and philosophy. It began with the Congress Socialist Party, founded in 1934 as a group within Congress seeking to nudge the parent body leftward, their leading members being Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Deva, J. B. Kripalani, and Ram Manohar Lohia. In 1948, the CSP left Congress and called itself the Socialist Party; in 1952, the Socialists and the Kisan Mazdoor Party united to form the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) (Figure 18.1); and, in 1955, Lohia broke off to form his own Socialist Party, which he merged with the Samyukta Socialist Party in 1965. Further fragmentation and mergers followed. Socialism petered out during the 1970s as a major force outside Congress, leaving Jayaprakash Narayan as the last of the heroic generation of the National Movement to hold the banner aloft. Nehru inclined to compromise with the Congress right and with Gandhi in order to preserve the unity of the party, while the CSP refused such accommodation and eventually broke with Congress. For the rest they were cut from the same cloth, and both Nehru and Gandhi worked strenuously to keep them within the party. For a long time they hoped that Nehru would join hands with the CSP to make it a potent national party under his leadership, and he sought to collaborate with them even after they had left.



Fig. 18.1 Praja Socialist Party Congress, Allahabad, 2 February 1954. (Photograph by Vrije Volk/International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)

Gandhian socialists stood somewhat apart, with Gandhi declaring in 1933 that 'I call myself a socialist. I love the very word, but I will not preach the same socialism as most socialists do.' He followed it up a few years later with the dictum that all land belongs to the people, to whom it must be restored.¹⁴ Their ideals consisted of satyagraha or non-violent direct action; high priority to cottage, village, and small-scale industry; secularism and communal harmony; affirmative action and the overcoming of caste discrimination; co-operation; vigorous local democracy; and the property owner to function as a trustee rather than as exploiter of class advantage. All of these except trusteeship were socialist goals also. But socialists differed from Gandhians by according primacy to modern industry over cottage industry; to party politics over 'constructive work' or social work; to class struggle over class conciliation; and violent action if required over Gandhi's uncompromising non-violence.

Gandhians threw themselves into social work rather than the political power struggles which absorbed the other socialists. For example, Jayaprakash Narayan, a militant and even revolutionary member of the CSP, abandoned party politics in 1954 in order to immerse himself in social work, or *sarvodaya*; Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya followed the same route by promoting cottage industries, handicrafts, and theatre; and Vinoba Bhave was the quintessential Gandhian who devoted his entire life to social work in villages. But Gandhi himself was the exception to this pattern of non-political social work, for he both understood and played the politics of power with consummate skill. His effortless rise to the top of the Congress Party almost as soon as he arrived in India in 1915 is evidence of his leadership quality; thereafter he remained the undisputed leader of nationalism in its supreme contest with colonialism; and he proved himself adept at internal faction manoeuvres also, as in his elimination of Subhas Chandra Bose from the top leadership of the party in 1939. However, after independence Gandhi was planning a life of social activism and avoidance of high politics in the manner of his disciples, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Deva, and others. Gandhi's fundamental premise that opposed classes can work for 'mutual good',¹⁵ his conciliatory methods, and his orientation to constructive work made radicals impatient as they plunged into the grand political joust with colonialism, into party politics, and into the class struggles between peasant and landlord and worker and employer.

¹⁴ Gandhi, *My Socialism*, pp. 3, 10. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

In the political realm, socialists were committed to pluralist electoral democracy and the constitution. In this respect they differed little from their principal competitors to their left and right. To their left, the communists adhered to what they despised as bourgeois democracy, becoming nonetheless one of its stoutest champions after their failed insurgencies in Telangana (1946–51) and in Bengal and Kerala (1946–7). To the right stood the communal parties, the national or Hindutva one being the Jana Sangh, later renamed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), powerfully reinforced by the ostensibly social service and cultural organization, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). They have been equally committed to electoral politics despite being always polemically accused by their opponents of being undemocratic. But on the extremes there have been and are several movements and insurgencies which do not accept the constitution or this form of politics. They range from the Naxalites or Maoists on the left, via the nationalist and secessionist movements in Kashmir, Nagaland, and Mizoram, to the Sikh or Khalistani ones in Punjab on the right. The socialists, both within and outside Congress, are thus located firmly in the mainstream of Indian democratic politics along with the rest of Congress, the communists, Hindutva, and most regional parties.

But, like most others, the socialists have also attempted to violate the constitution, bypass elections, and overthrow constitutionally elected governments. Nehru himself, the supreme democrat and ardent socialist, had acquiesced in overthrowing the elected communist government of Kerala in 1959. Congress in Kerala, the PSP, and sundry other bodies mobilized to unseat the communist government. Against his better judgement and constitutional conscience, Nehru succumbed to their pressure instead of waiting for the issue to be decided by an election. He invoked the constitutional power of the centre to dismiss a state government and impose direct rule from the centre, or President's Rule. Similarly, the non-Congress socialists led the movement to topple Indira Gandhi in 1974–5, which she fought off by imposing an internal emergency throughout the country and suspending the democratic process and the rule of law in 1975–7. Ironically, this movement was led by Jayaprakash Narayan.

Political Action

The socialists in Congress, both those led by Nehru and the CSP caucus, set themselves apart from the Congress majority and differed among themselves on questions of programme and policy, but not of ideology. They differed

primarily on: (1) independence; (2) the class struggle; (3) the economy; and (4) culture.

On independence, the Congress right, the Congress left, and the CSP differed on how far independence was to be sought or achieved by negotiation with the colonial regime. It began with whether they were to demand independence or accept dominion status like the former white colonies of Canada or Australia within the empire and Commonwealth. The majority, led by Gandhi, was prepared to accept the compromise of dominion status, which Nehru, Bose, and the CSP vehemently opposed. They wished to sever all connection with Britain and build an independent relationship thereafter, friendly if possible. As early as 1927 in Madras, Nehru pushed through the independence resolution by Congress, which Gandhi did not approve of, and between 1927 and 1929 he ran the Independence for India League as a pressure group to move Congress leftward to demand independence. The League ceased to function after Congress passed the full independence resolution at its Lahore session in 1929 with Nehru presiding. But the matter of dominion status versus independence remained a constant source of friction between Gandhi and Nehru thereafter.

As a corollary to this arose the question of forming Congress ministries under the Government of India Act of 1935. This Act provided for elected governments in the provinces, but the colonial government retained vast discretionary powers, which was anathema to the Congress radicals. Nehru denounced the Act and proposed to contest elections in order to mobilize, but not to form governments. Yet, in 1936, Nehru prepared the Congress manifesto for the elections without mention of socialist objectives. When the results were published, the right wing of Congress insisted on accepting office, which pained him greatly. While he refused to break with the party, he did not assume office. But the situation was remarkably fluid. Even the left-wing militant Bose negotiated with the governor to form a ministry in Bengal, while C. Rajagopalachari of the right worked all too closely with the governor in Madras, just as B. G. Kher did in Bombay.¹⁶

The CSP, on the other hand, refused to have anything to do with the Act, which had been Nehru's initial position. They were consistent in their policy of not serving under a colonial dispensation or allowing the future of India, that is, independence and the constitution, to be determined by negotiation with the

16 S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 1, 1889–1947 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 229–31, 243.

Raj. Yet Narendra Deva of the CSP warmly welcomed Congress's very non-socialist election manifesto of 1936 as a 'revolutionary document'.¹⁷

This was followed by the thorny problem of their attitude to the war. Congress was ideologically inclined towards the Allies even as Nehru inveighed against the Allies as the imperialist twin of fascism; but Gandhi and Nehru refused to support the war effort without a national government which would segue into independence after the war. Bose, like Nehru, analysed it as a war between imperialisms,¹⁸ but lobbied for Axis support against the British to liberate India. The CSP, however, remained firm in their opposition to participating, emphatically rejecting both the Allied doctrine of the war of democracy against fascism and the Soviet one of the people's war. The CSP and the rest of Congress were bothered that the communists supported the war after the Soviet Union was attacked. The socialists argued that it remained a war between rival imperialisms, although the Soviet Union had become one of its victims. With admirable foresight Narendra Deva pointed out in 1942 that 'Peace in the event of an Allied victory will be largely dictated by the USA this time',¹⁹ and in 1945 that the Soviet Union 'is more afraid of her new allies than of her erstwhile enemy Germany'.²⁰ In any case, he argued, not only was it not a people's war as the communists claimed, but also the 'people' would have no role in the peace. India was on her own. Jayaprakash Narayan, logically enough, proposed guerrilla action against the colonial regime during the war.²¹ But the British government obdurately refused to concede an inch, and Congress conducted its most militant mobilization against the regime, the Quit India movement in 1942. Thus, Congress and the CSP came together during the war, although differences of emphasis and detail remained. After the war, Jayaprakash Narayan proposed another Quit India movement.²² He was consistent as ever that there should be no negotiation with the colonial regime.

17 Speech to the All India Congress Committee, Bombay, 22 August 1936, in Narendra Deva, *Selected Works of Acharya Narendra Deva*, ed. H. D. Sharma (New Delhi: Radiant, 1998) (hereafter *SWAND*), vol. 1, p. 77.

18 'All Power to the People', presidential address to the All India Forward Bloc Conference, Nagpur, 18 June 1940, S. Ch. Bose, *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose* (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1962), p. 123.

19 'The War: Imperialist or People's?', Bombay, Congress Socialist Party, 1942, reproduced in *SWAND*, vol. 11, p. 18.

20 'India and the Post-War World', interview in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Annual Puja Number, 1945, in *SWAND*, vol. 11, p. 95.

21 S. R. Chowdhuri, *Leftism in India, 1917-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p. 162.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Such active neutrality during the war was in effect a socialist position stretching from Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan, and it included even Gandhi. They argued that India had little to gain and much to lose by entering a war that did not concern her, one that would only serve to perpetuate her colonial subjugation; they were, however, ideologically firmly opposed to the Axis powers and refused to use them to further Indian independence in the manner that Bose did. The communists, on the other hand, participated from 1941 when the Soviet Union was attacked, and the Muslim League wholeheartedly supported the British and were rewarded with Pakistan. This socialist approach prefigured non-alignment, the foreign policy that Nehru devised for independent India subsequently.

In 1946, after the war, Nehru accepted office as head of the Interim Government, a government for the transition to independence, and was in effect the prime minister (technically, vice president of the Executive Council) under the colonial governor-general. It was regarded by Congress as a national government. But the CSP once again demurred: Jayaprakash Narayan was dismayed that yet again continuity with colonial rule was being prolonged; and Narendra Deva warned that India was not free merely because Nehru had formed the government, since the armed forces were under British commanders who would ignore Nehru's orders. In 1947, Nehru accepted independence for India as a dominion, which he, like the socialists, had opposed for so long. Only in 1950 was India proclaimed a republic; but he made yet another compromise, albeit a minor one, by retaining India within the Commonwealth of Nations headed by the British Crown, which the CSP, now outside Congress, denounced as little short of joining the Anglo-American bloc. Nehru was psychologically always with the left, but he diluted his position to preserve the unity of the party by accommodating the Congress right which had the most important leaders after himself, namely, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and C. Rajagopalachari.

On the class struggle, the CSP objected to Gandhi's conciliatory approach. Congress wished to subordinate class to the national movement, while the CSP sought to give them equal weight and the communists accorded priority to class over nationalism. Both Gandhi and Nehru focused on overthrowing colonialism and strove mightily to unite diverse Indian classes, communities, and regions in that cause. To them, pitting Indian against Indian amounted to conceding an advantage to the Raj. Nehru regularly mobilized the peasantry and workers, and included the usual class welfare and agitational rights in Congress resolutions, especially in the Karachi Congress resolution of 1931 which listed the fundamental rights. However, faithful to the Congress

strategy of attacking the state but not the class, peasants were urged to withhold taxes but to pay their rents; at the same time, the party would press landlords to moderate their demands, but without much success. In like manner, in industrial disputes, Congress played the role of mediator rather than of strike leader. As these campaigns gathered momentum in the 1930s, Nehru became more radical and supported the no-rent agitations; but Gandhi resisted and preferred conciliation and persuasion wherever possible. Nehru's heart was with the socialists and their class radicalism, and he often supported radical peasant demands against landlords, but he finally settled for the Gandhian strategy.

The CSP was formed in 1934 in order to overcome these inhibitions, although its programme was little different from Nehru's own. It was organized within Congress rather than outside it, with one of the founders, Narendra Deva, being a professed Marxist whose analyses of class and world politics recalled Lenin most often. He argued that class and nationalism could not be separated since the colonial regime rested firmly on landlords and capitalists. To conduct a class struggle therefore amounted to seeking national emancipation, and vice versa.²³ He critiqued Congress for its stressing the drain of wealth from India to Britain rather than the class structure on which colonial power rested. But he also warned the peasant class organization, the All India Kisan Sabha, of the danger of 'peasantism' or pursuing nothing beyond peasant interests, and ignoring larger issues of the nation and the world.²⁴ As a good Leninist, he was in effect warning against the peasant equivalent of 'trade union consciousness' among workers. The CSP could therefore afford to remain within Congress until independence, and Jayaprakash Narayan was reported later even to have regretted their secession in 1948.²⁵

Both Nehru and even Gandhi were positive towards the CSP. In 1939 and again in 1947, Gandhi had proposed Narendra Deva as president of Congress. In 1939, Gandhi was keen on a socialist president to beat off the challenge from that other radical, Subhas Chandra Bose; but Nehru dissented for fear of further division within Congress. In 1947, Gandhi wanted Narendra Deva again, but Patel objected. Gandhi understood the importance of keeping the

23 Narendra Deva, Presidential Address to the First Session of the All India Socialist Conference, Patna, 17 May 1934, in *SWAND*, vol. 1, pp. 9–10; A. Nauriya, *Non-Violent Action and Socialist Radicalism: Narendra Deva in India's Freedom Movement* (New Delhi: NMML, 2015), pp. 14–15.

24 Narendra Deva, Presidential Address to the Annual Conference of the All-India Kisan Conference, Gaya, March 1939 (transl. from Hindi), in *SWAND*, vol. 1, pp. 162, 169.

25 Nauriya, *Non-Violent Action*, p. 70.

socialists on his side,²⁶ and hoped to groom a second line of leadership from among them.²⁷ Only in 1948, shortly after Gandhi's death, did the socialists break away from Congress. With independence, the national movement lost its priority, and other social and political struggles, especially those of caste and class, could be pursued outside Congress with a clear nationalist conscience.

On the economy debates swirled around planning for industrialization; the relation of the public sector to the private sector; the relative importance of the capital goods, consumer goods, and cottage-industry sectors; agricultural productivity and co-operation; and taxation and monopolies. Nehru set the tone for the socialist discourse. From the 1920s he placed his faith in planning and in 1938 Congress set up the National Planning Committee under him to prepare plans for independent India. Here he laid out his priorities: rapid industrialization, capital goods industries to enable self-sustaining growth, and the core sectors under the state. Cottage and small-scale industries would be supported to provide employment and to cater to consumer demand. The private sector would find its place between the public sector and cottage industries, be subject to progressive taxation, and enjoy no privilege but be encouraged to function in a competitive environment. Agricultural productivity must rise in order both to feed the growing population and to generate surpluses for industry. Nehru placed his faith in mobilizing the farmers through reforms in agrarian relations. These consisted of abolishing zamindari rights, fixing an upper limit to landholding, and encouraging co-operation and village democracy. While he always advocated investment in agricultural technology, he stressed social and class relationships and village democracy above technology.

This strategy of Nehru's state-led industrialization, now dubbed socialist, was reformulated with theoretical and statistical sophistication by P. C. Mahalanobis, who drew up the Second Five-Year Plan of 1956–61. It enjoyed a broad consensus on the left, from Congress to the CPI; and even the Gandhians found much to applaud, for the cottage industries had been provided for, and agrarian reform and co-operation were treated seriously. However, the left had a number of grievances. They complained of monopolies, limited taxation, and too little nationalization. In agrarian relations, the abolition of zamindari tenures was dragging on too long, feudal land-owners were granted compensation, the upper limits to landholding were not being enforced, and peasants continued to writhe in the grip of debt. Most of all,

26 Ibid., pp. 46–7, 61–2. 27 Chowdhuri, *Leftism in India*, pp. 226–7.

welfare measures devised for the rural poor were being cornered by the rural and upper-caste rich, intermediaries between the state and village who enjoyed the advantages of education, networks, control over village councils, and greater access to the police, bureaucracy, and politicians. The Congress right, led by Rajagopalachari, was severely critical, especially after the party resolved on the 'socialistic pattern of society' in 1955 at its Avadi session. He broke away to form the Swatantra party advocating *laissez faire*, and was generously supported by princes and capitalists. He also secured the support of two influential voices, Minoo Masani, formerly of the CSP, and N. G. Ranga, a congressman and leader of peasant movements. They issued dire warnings of India going the Soviet way with collectivization looming, and Nehru had to explain ceaselessly that voluntary co-operation did not entail forced collectivization. Other critics on the right called for greater stress on agricultural technology rather than village organization and land tenures, on consumer goods more than capital goods, and less ambitious plan targets: in these they were seconded by the World Bank and the US government, important sources of foreign aid. Capitalists complained that the private sector was being squeezed; but they were agreed in principle, for their own Bombay Plan of 1944 had proposed a state-led industrialization and an advanced public sector, which resembled the socialist Nehru's Second Five-Year Plan. The difference lay in the capitalists seeking to secure their future by urging the state to invest in sectors for which they were unable to raise the capital, while the socialists strove to control capitalism and set social goals which capitalists could not and would not do.

Action by the Gandhian socialists, other than the movement towards independence, was voluntarist and non-partisan. They focused largely on village democracy, co-operation in agriculture and agro-industry, and handicrafts. Nehru favoured village democracy through the elected panchayats or village councils as the foundation of Indian democracy, the base from which democracy would grow upward to the states and finally to parliament at the centre. The socialism of Nehru, the CSP, the PSP, and the Gandhians converged at this point. Nehru hoped that such institutions would ensure an agrarian revolution through greater equality, technological change, and higher productivity. Neither Nehru nor the Gandhians placed their bets on agricultural technology alone, since that would not reduce the gross inequalities of class and caste that so disfigured village life.

In this respect the most striking presence is that of Vinoba Bhave. He approached the problem of land shortage and tenurial structures in a manner that was typically Gandhian. He walked from village to village, mobilizing

volunteers who were willing to undertake such arduous pilgrimages, and at each centre he would urge large land-owners to donate some of their land to indigent peasants for co-operative farming or other production. This was known as *bhoodan*. He would then persuade villagers to give their labour freely in such co-operative ventures, a process called *shramdan*. When the majority of villagers and their land constituted themselves as a co-operative, it became *gramdan*. He called upon the urban middle class, or those with regular earnings, to contribute a part of it as a *sampattidan*. This was not a charitable contribution, for the owner was to spend it on a good cause, on the principle that wealth was derived from the community; and accounts were rendered to Vinoba Bhave. The supreme moment came with *jeevandhan* by which a person devoted his life wholly to this movement, as Jayaprakash Narayan did from 1954. Vinoba hoped thereby to induce a change of heart, which would alter class and caste relations in villages and lead to productive improvement. It avoided the class and caste conflict that political parties revelled in, and it did not depend directly on the state for action, although always co-ordinating with it. He was regarded universally as Gandhi's heir, and Nehru accorded him extraordinary public respect; but Nehru regarded many of his schemes as impractical and often did little more than acknowledge his letters. Critics pointed out that the movement was inconsequential, that only waste lands were given away, and that little in fact changed on the ground. But Vinoba countered that it was designed to transfigure relationships. More importantly, it created the appropriate moral climate for the great tenurial changes that Nehru and the socialists considered essential to rural transformation, and it ran parallel to the trusteeship doctrine which modified the basis of the legitimacy of bourgeois property.

Culture was another domain where independence was to be asserted, but it was as complex and intractable as the political and economic spheres. Some socialists, especially Lohia, chose language as their preferred site of action. This consisted of two related but different issues, the appropriate roles for the English and Hindi languages. Knowledge of English is an asset the world over, but in India it is both an asset and a liability. It is fully accepted as necessary for global communication, and that as such it should be studied as in countries to which English is not native. But in India, owing to its colonial past, English, not the Indian languages, is the language of instruction in the best schools and universities, in modern professional work, and at the higher levels of government. This is universally regarded as a perversity which must be ended; but there has been no agreement on the next step. Since Hindi is the language spoken by the largest number, but not by the majority, many

had assumed Hindi would become the national language. Non-Hindi speakers dismissed that aspiration with anger and contempt. They countered that whatever may happen to English, Hindi would not replace it, that Hindi was just another Indian language and in no way to be privileged over the rest of them. But Lohia argued that Hindi must substitute for English, *tout court*. He did qualify that position, but he seemed to equivocate; more importantly, the non-Hindi-speaking majority of the country came to regard him as a parochial chauvinist in the cause of Hindi. Lohia's motivation was impeccably nationalist to begin with: it was to secure the independence of India culturally and educationally, to free it from the peculiarly emasculating effects of the English language. Instead, Hindi chauvinism has come to be associated with Lohia and the socialism of a provincial variety in north India, with Nehruvians and the PSP distancing themselves from such raucous extremes.

The blend of socialism and Gandhian ideas has also left its indelible mark on daily life and culture in India through the creative modernization of innumerable crafts from all over the country. The principal mover in this field was another doughty socialist fighter from the three decades before independence, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. After 1947 she declined all offers of high official posts and directed her energies into reviving the crafts which had become so anaemic in colonial times. She toured the country with her enthusiastic colleagues to locate virtually every traditional craft in textiles, wood, metal, ivory, bone, bamboo, cane, straw, paper, and anything else; she assisted the craftspeople with design, modern tools and machines, credit, marketing, co-operative organization, and publicity; and an entire range of skills and products came alive and captured the imagination and decorated the homes of generations of Indians thereafter. Her main vehicles to pursue this immensely creative endeavour were the Cottage Industries Emporium and the All India Handicrafts Board, both of which she headed from 1952. Far from being extinguished by modern industry and consumerism, all these crafts are now a vibrant part of Indian culture and its aesthetic. With socialist passion she addressed the question of the penury of craftspeople who had lost their former royal and aristocratic patrons, and with Gandhian sensitivity she contributed so greatly to rural communities and their culture.

Conclusion

India was never socialist, not even to the extent that post-Second World War Britain may be said to have been under Clement Attlee; but socialism was

a pervasive presence. It was embodied in the Planning Commission, in the public sector, and in welfare programmes. The socialist parties vanished in effect from the late 1970s, and Jayaprakash Narayan's death in 1979 marked the end of a generation of hopes and leaders; and with liberalization from the 1990s socialism has become either a distant memory or a political jibe. However, it has always flourished outside of formal state structures, especially in the Gandhian forms of action, and continues to do so through the extensive network of non-governmental organizations or NGOs which engage in everything from literacy campaigns to the conservation of the environment. Socialism continues to prosper in India, not as a political movement but in its non-political Gandhian avatar. Nehru denied that there was such a thing as Indian socialism, preferring to regard it as a global movement;²⁸ Gandhians likewise saw themselves as global although Gandhism is considered quintessentially Indian. Two streams of thought, both universal in their self-understanding, flowed together to become what is now thought of as Indian socialism.

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The Lanka Sama Samaja Party

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The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP, Lanka Party for Social Equality), Sri Lanka's oldest socialist party, was formed in colonial Ceylon in December 1935. It belonged to the first generation of socialist parties in south Asia. The LSSP has also had a dual existence, as a political party as well as a social-intellectual movement in colonial and post-colonial Sri Lanka. Because of its interventions in shaping the nature and trajectories of Sri Lanka's political, social, and economic change, the LSSP has also been a key agency in Sri Lanka's modernity.

Formation of the LSSP

The founding of the LSSP in 1935 occurred against a historical background marked by a number of developments under colonial rule.¹ The first was the emergence of a colonial civil society at the centre of which were a militant trade union movement and a variety of nationalist agitations that had defied, although to a limited degree, the authority of the colonial state as well as colonial capital. Thus, colonial civil society had become the site where the possibility of radical alternatives to colonialism and colonial capitalism could germinate. The second was the partial democratization of British colonial rule in the island of Ceylon through the Donoughmore reforms of 1931. These constitutional reforms introduced to Ceylon universal adult franchise and representative democracy, and granted limited executive power in the government to the elected political elites. The first legislative elections of 1931 held under the principle of universal franchise had set in motion a new

1 For the social and political conditions that provided the context for the emergence of the LSSP and the left movement in colonial Sri Lanka, see V. K. Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labour Movement in Ceylon* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972); N. Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

process of political awakening and participation among the ordinary masses. The third development was the laying of foundations for a welfare state, jointly by the colonial government and the elected local political elites.

The LSSP initially took the character of a social democratic party with socialist commitments. Its ideology and politics were influenced primarily by different currents of socialist thought as well as anti-colonial Indian nationalism during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Its leadership was originally composed of 'nationalists and those advocating Marxism in order to give leadership on two fronts, the nationalist movement and the working-class struggle'.² The LSSP was 'at its inception a Left nationalist formation with broad democratic and egalitarian aims and a loose organization'.³ Its founding manifesto was indeed a progressive and social democratic document with socialist, social democratic, and republicanist goals. Three goals highlighted in the manifesto were: (a) socialization of the means of production; (b) attainment of national independence; and (c) abolition of economic and political inequality and oppression arising from differences of class, race, caste, creed, or sex.⁴

Before the LSSP was formed, those who later founded it were engaged in promoting social service work among the rural and urban poor. The core group of these activists had recently returned from England, where they had received university education and also exposure to socialist and radical movements. They mobilized volunteers recruited from students and young professionals of urban middle-class families in their pioneering social work among the urban and rural poor. This was during the early 1930s. Soon they began working with unionized urban workers in the industrial and commercial sectors in and around the city of Colombo. These social service activities among the poor and the involvement with trade union struggles soon laid the foundation for the formation of the LSSP in 1935.⁵

Since its formation, the LSSP worked on several fronts, mobilizing workers to win their rights, forming militant trade unions, offering a new leadership to the working class, while exposing the conservative politics and corrupt practices of the traditional trade union leadership. They also directly

2 V. K. Jayawardena, 'The origins of the left movement in Sri Lanka', *Social Scientist* 2, 6/7 (1974), pp. 3–28 at p. 3.

3 H. Abhayavardhana, 'Categories of Left Thinking in Ceylon', in H. Abhayavardhana (ed.), *Hector Abhayavardhana: Selected Writings* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, n.d.), p. 172.

4 Y. R. Amarasinghe, *Revolutionary Idealism and Parliamentary Politics: A Study of Trotskyism in Ceylon* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 1998), p. 15; G. J. Lersky, *Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon: A Documentary History of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, 1935–1942* (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1968), pp. 27–8.

5 Amarasinghe, *Revolutionary Idealism*, pp. 9–14.

challenged the colonial state, exposing its repressive and exploitative rule. That helped the LSSP to promote a radical agenda for anti-colonial politics while continuing the social welfare activism among the rural and urban poor. The LSSP's focus on mass politics from the early days also enabled the party to effectively use parliamentary and electoral politics to challenge the colonial rulers as well as local political elites and also agitate for egalitarian social and economic reforms. Two founding leaders of the party, Philip Gunawardena and N. M. Perera, were elected to the State Council, the colonial legislature, in 1936 and they utilized it as a major forum, 'a popular tribunal' for their anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and socialist agenda.⁶

The LSSP as a Socialist Party

The turning of the LSSP into a revolutionary socialist party occurred towards the end of 1930s when the party embraced Trotskyism. Philip Gunawardena, the main founding leader, is credited to have introduced his colleagues to Trotsky's writings. According to Leslie Goonewardene, the LSSP's official party historian, most of the LSSP leaders were 'disturbed by certain international developments, such as the Moscow Trials and the Popular Front line of the Communist parties of the West'. Similarly, 'a careful reading of Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* ... also had a profound effect on the leaders of the LSSP'.⁷ In 1942, the LSSP became affiliated to the Bolshevik–Leninist Party of India (BLPI) as well as the Fourth International. Throughout this early period, the LSSP emerged as the most militant anti-imperialist and revolutionary socialist voice in colonial Sri Lanka. The fact that its core leaders were Western-educated professionals from elite families gave the LSSP some degree of social prestige and space too in colonial Ceylonese society.

However, the LSSP's conversion to Trotskyism caused an immediate split in the party. Sections that were opposed to Trotskyism because of their political sympathies with the Soviet Union and identified with the Stalinist camp of the world socialist movement left the party in 1938.⁸ That was the first major split marking the beginning of a series of factionalisms and splits, based on ideological, personal, and programmatic differences that had haunted the LSSP throughout its existence. The 1938 split between Trotskyists and

6 Lersky, *Origins*, p. 36.

7 L. Goonewardene, *A Short History of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party* (Maradana: Gunaratne, 1960), p. 20.

8 Amarasinghe, *Revolutionary Idealism*, pp. 31–2.

Stalinists led to the formation of a pro-Moscow United Socialist Party in 1941, which was renamed in 1943 as the Ceylon Communist Party.

The LSSP during the Second World War

A significant transformation of the LSSP occurred during the 1940s. This was the period of the Second World War, and Sri Lanka was a key strategic asset to the British naval operations in Asia. The LSSP's militant agitations against the imperial war led to the proscription of the party in 1942 and the imprisonment of the top leadership. Having organized a daring jail break, the party leaders escaped to India in April 1942 and established contacts with Indian Trotskyists of the BLPI. The BLPI had been formed the year before in Sri Lanka with the participation of Indian and Sri Lankan Trotskyists. Two major developments occurred in the party during the period between 1943 and 1945. First, the BLPI activists in India and their Ceylonese counterparts began to function on the assumption that the imperial war had made revolutionary mass uprisings in the three British colonies – India, Burma, and Ceylon – possible. That shifted the focus of those LSSP groups that were in close contact with the BLPI towards building a cadre-based revolutionary party. Secondly, differences began to occur between two segments of the party leadership, the old guard and the new generation of second-level leaders, on the political strategy that the party should follow. While the leaders belonging to the first generation emphasized the need to build a broad mass movement under the leadership of the LSSP, the new activists, who were most enthusiastic about the BLPI line, argued for building a cadre-based revolutionary party in the image of the Bolshevik Party.⁹

After the war had ended and the party's ban had been lifted, the same dispute re-surfaced. On their return from exile in India, some of the party's old guard had also given up the thesis of the early possibility of a socialist revolution in India, Burma, and Ceylon. They argued, revising the position they held earlier, that the ending of the Second World War had altered the political conditions that previously existed and that revolution in India, Burma, and Ceylon was no longer a realistic possibility.¹⁰ They advanced the new political line that the LSSP, in its post-proscription phase, should be rebuilt as a broad mass-based party, with its

9 R. Gunawardena, *Satanaka satahan [Notes from a Struggle]* (Kosgama: Vijitha Gunaewardena, 2007), pp. 72–3; A. Richardson (ed.), *Blows against the Empire: Trotskyism in Ceylon. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party, 1935–1964* (London: Socialist Platform, 1997), pp. 116–17.

10 M. Fernando, 'An Account of the LSSP, 1939–1960', in Richardson (ed.), *Blows against the Empire*, pp. 72–3.

operations confined to Sri Lanka. Philip Gunawardena and N. M. Perera, two leading founder members of the LSSP, led this section of the party. In contrast, the radicals, led by Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Goonewardene, who were second-generation leaders, brought back the argument for re-building the LSSP as a cadre-based party as well as continuing its affiliations to the BLPI as its Ceylonese section, a position which the other section vehemently rejected. When the differences between the two sections sharpened, all attempts to reconcile the two groups failed. The two factions separated in 1945, one faction calling itself the LSSP and the other calling itself the Bolshevik Samasamaja Party (BSP).¹¹

The post-war years were the period in which the LSSP underwent another significant transformation by assuming the character of a parliamentary party, while de-emphasizing the commitment to socialism through revolutionary struggle. This shift in terms of the goals and strategies seems to have begun to germinate in the twin context of the ending of the Second World War and impending political independence that the British colonial rulers were making preparations to grant to India, Burma, and Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, there was a subtle distinction in the respective stands which the two LSSP factions had taken on political independence. While the mainstream LSSP, led by N. M. Perera, had extended a conditional welcome to the political independence of 1948, the BSP, led by Colvin R. de Silva, took up a radical stand, describing it as 'not independence', but 'actually a refashioning of the chains of Ceylon's slavery to British imperialism'. De Silva also insisted that 'the struggle against our own bourgeoisie comes to the forefront on the road to the overthrow of the continuing imperialist power in Ceylon'.¹² However, the post-independence years – Sri Lanka received independence from British colonial rule in 1948 – saw the merging of the two LSSPs as well as their transition to a stage in which primacy was given to parliamentary and trade union struggles as the means to achieving the LSSP's programme and goals.

The LSSP's Trade Union Politics during and after the Second World War and after Independence

The LSSP's leadership came from an elite, professional social background. There were only a few workers at the level of leadership, and they invariably came from the party's trade union structure. Trade unions were the main

¹¹ Amarasinghe, *Revolutionary Idealism*, pp. 72–8.

¹² C. R. de Silva, 'Independence Real or Fake', in Richardson (ed.), *Blows against the Empire*, p. 127.

organizational backbone of the party. The LSSP trade union activism goes back to the early 1930s, a few years before the party was formed. By this time, colonial Sri Lanka had an active trade union movement. When the LSSP began to intervene in the trade union movement, the union leadership had become politically conservative and communalist. Therefore, the early interventions made by the LSSP in the trade union field were meant to give a militant, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and socialist orientation to the working-class movement. As early as February 1936, the LSSP was even able to give leadership to a two-day countrywide strike by motor workers.¹³ By 1939–40, the LSSP had begun to organize trade union activities among the Tamil plantation workers in the central part of the island.

During the period of proscription by the colonial government, the LSSP's trade union activities had to be suspended since the party functioned underground. After 1945, the LSSP returned to open trade union politics, and there were series of strikes in 1946 and 1947, launched by the LSSP-affiliated unions. The general strike of 1947 under the LSSP's leadership was a major political event, since it was the first countrywide mass strike action to have occurred in colonial Sri Lanka.¹⁴

The next major working-class action led by the LSSP and its unions took place in August 1953. It took the form of a *hartal*, or civil disobedience, in protest against the government's economic policy that had caused a rise in food prices and in the cost of living. The widespread mass action by the workers and rural citizens shook the right-wing government and forced the prime minister to resign from office. Although the LSSP could create a mini political crisis through organized as well as spontaneous mass action, it could not develop it further into a mass movement.

Until the end of the 1970s, the LSSP remained the leading political party in the trade union field, in both public and private sectors. This was despite the fact that other parties also had their trade union wings. However, the LSSP's emphasis on trade union politics with the urban working class had a negative consequence too. The party ignored two important segments of Sri Lankan society, Tamil plantation workers in the central hill districts and the rural peasantry.

The LSSP's Parliamentary Politics after 1947

Sri Lanka's first parliamentary election held in 1947, one year before political independence, marked a watershed in the evolution of the LSSP. Initially

13 Goonewardene, *Short History*, p. 16 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–7.

formed during the mid-1930s in a context of colonial rule and conditioned in the context of the Second World War, the LSSP's politics saw the beginning of a transformation in the post-war and post-colonial contexts. By this time, the LSSP as a political movement had also developed a strong trade union base in the urban areas and a popular mass base in several rural districts.

The two LSSP parties – LSSP and BSP – contested the first parliamentary election in 1947 and emerged as relatively weak opposition entities in the first post-independence legislature. The disunity prevented the left parties from consolidating themselves as a credible socialist alternative to the post-colonial ruling elites who were represented by the newly formed United National Party (UNP), the leading right-wing party in Sri Lanka that formed the first post-independence government in 1947. In the 101-member House of Representatives, the three left parties could win only 18 seats, with 10, 5, and 3, respectively, going to the LSSP, the BSP and the Communist Party (CP).¹⁵ The political enmity between the LSSP and BSP also prevented the LSSP, the largest single party in the opposition, from getting the position of Leader of Opposition in parliament. Upon realizing the continuing political cost of disunity, the LSSP and BSP decided in 1950 to unify. Ironically, this unification too carried a political cost to the LSSP. Philip Gunawardena, the founding leader of the LSSP, quit the party in 1950 along with a sizeable section of trade union activists and formed a new party calling itself the Viplavakari (Revolutionary) LSSP or VLSSP.¹⁶ This split too led to further weakening of the LSSP's parliamentary and electoral strength.

Disunity and splits apart, a key factor that prevented the LSSP as well as the CP from further advancing the socialist alternative through parliamentary politics in post-colonial Sri Lanka was the emergence of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) as a centre-left and Sinhalese nationalist parliamentary party, successfully challenging the right-wing elite dominance maintained by the UNP. The SLFP was founded in 1951 by a breakaway faction of the UNP led by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who formed a nationalist-left coalition government in 1956 under a new alliance called Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP, People's United Front). Philip Gunawardena's party, the VLSSP, was a partner in the MEP coalition government. Gunawardena was instrumental in turning the MEP's reformist policy agenda in a social democratic direction. Gunawardena had in fact left the LSSP in 1951 to explore the formation of a new political bloc with 'progressive forces' in order to advance social and economic reforms through electoral politics. In 1956, he found an ally in the

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 41. ¹⁶ Amarasinghe, *Revolutionary Idealism*, pp. 80–2.

SLFP to launch such a reform project and co-founded the MEP coalition with Bandaranaike. At the parliamentary election held in 1956, the MEP coalition won fifty-one seats while the UNP, the former ruling party, could win only eight seats. The LSSP obtained fourteen seats, recording only a minor improvement from its nine seats obtained in the 1952 parliamentary election.¹⁷ Although the right-wing sections of the MEP government resisted Gunawardena's radical reform project, he managed to introduce agrarian reform legislation, the Paddy Land Act in 1958, that protected the rights of tenant farmers.

The shift in strategy by the VLSSP led by Philip Gunawardena from revolutionary socialism to parliamentary reforms through coalition politics with the 'progressive bourgeoisie' succeeded only partially. The MEP government expelled Gunawardena's party from the coalition in 1959 and the government also collapsed soon after the assassination of Prime Minister Bandaranaike in September 1959. Yet Gunawardena's coalition experiment with the SLFP had an unintended consequence: some sections of the LSSP too began to make a strategic shift towards reformist politics through parliamentary coalition politics with the 'progressive bourgeois' party of the SLFP. That strategic shift of the LSSP was spearheaded by N. M. Perera, himself a founder leader of the party, during the early 1960s. In 1964, the SLFP and LSSP successfully negotiated a coalition agreement and the LSSP for the first time became party to a non-socialist government. N. M. Perera became the new coalition regime's minister of finance.

The coalition politics of the VLSSP in 1956 and later of the LSSP in 1964 were to have major repercussions for the political fortunes of the LSSP as well as the socialist movement as a whole. It enabled a capitalist party, the SLFP, characterized by the LSSP as a petit bourgeois party as well as a progressive bourgeois party, to (a) intrude into the electoral bases of the left, (b) copy socialist slogans and parts of the left social and economic reform platform, (c) appropriate slogans and the political language of the left, and (d) entice many left activists and middle-level leaders to desert their parties and join it seeking better opportunities for personal advancement. It is perhaps against this background that since the 1960s, the LSSP, along with the CP, has adopted a permanent policy of coalition politics with the SLFP. Consequently, the relationship between the SLFP and the two left parties, the LSSP and CP, became one of unequal partnership, forcing the latter to totally depend on the SLFP for their survival and continuity.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

The LSSP in Coalition Politics: Gains and Costs

The LSSP began its journey of coalition politics with the SLFP in 1964 and it lasted until 2015. Since 2019, the LSSP has continued its alliance with the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP, Sri Lanka's People's Front), the successor to the SLFP. The coalition has continued in two forms, as coalition governments and opposition alliances, always against the common adversary, the right-wing UNP. The justification for this enduring coalition relationship with the SLFP has remained constant: the unity of progressive forces against those identified as 'Western imperialists' and their local right-wing and 'reactionary' representatives.

When the LSSP began to move in the direction of a coalition government with the SLFP in 1964, it caused a major crisis within the party, leading to yet another debilitating split. The political context within which the LSSP formed a coalition government with the SLFP and then the LSSP found itself in a major crisis was marked by the collapse of a broad left unity alliance which was about to be formed in May 1963.¹⁸ The initiative for the proposed United Left Front was taken jointly by the three left-wing parties that existed at the time, the LSSP, CP, and MEP, which was the new name of Philip Gunawardena's VLSSP since 1959. The ruling party at that time was the SLFP, led by Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the widow of former prime minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. The left parties, which were in the opposition at the time, were quite active in trade union mobilization through strike action against the government's unpopular economic policies. Facing an unmanageable economic and political crisis, Mrs Bandaranaike invited the LSSP to join her government. N. M. Perera, the LSSP leader, accepted the invitation, forcing the unexpected collapse of a broad left alliance, in the formation of which the LSSP had played a pioneering role only a few months previously.

The ending of the much-anticipated formation of the United Socialist Front and the unforeseen action of a section of the LSSP leadership to negotiate a coalition government with the SLFP sent shock waves through the LSSP, leading to an immediate break-up of the party. Radical sections of the party that lost the anti-coalition vote at the party conference held in June 1964 formed a new party, the LSSP (Revolutionary). Radical and youth sections of the LSSP went with the new party.¹⁹ The section led by N. M. Perera formed a coalition government with the SLFP in 1964, of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 160–3. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

which Perera himself became the minister of finance. Several other second-level leaders of the party received ministerial portfolios in the government.

The LSSP's, and also the CP's, coalition move with the SLFP signified a decisive turning point in the history of the left movement in Sri Lanka. First, it marked the end of the independent political role of the left in Sri Lankan politics and in fact inaugurated a new phase in which both the LSSP and the CP became minor appendages of the SLFP, a bourgeois party. Secondly, it inaugurated a phase in the LSSP's de-radicalization, robbing the party of its radical, independent, anti-systematic, and anti-establishment identity. De-radicalization also opened up a wide political space for the emergence of a radical 'New Left' in Sri Lanka, committed to socialist revolution by extra-parliamentary means. Thirdly, the new generation of educated youth, who were radicalized amidst worsening social and economic crisis, no longer found the LSSP and CP, the 'Old Left', attractive political options. And, finally, the two left parties began to lose their trade union, youth, student, and ethnic minority constituencies, because of the ideological compromises they had to make with the SLFP's ethno-nationalist, state-capitalist, right-populist politics.

The LSSP's coalition move also sent shockwaves through the world socialist movement. When the break-up occurred, Ernest Germain (Mandel) of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International was in Colombo talking to the two rival camps of the LSSP. Germain described the LSSP's decision to form a coalition government with the SLFP as 'a heavy defeat for the Fourth International'.²⁰ Soon, the Fourth International Secretariat decided to sever its relation with the LSSP, which was considered one of the most important sections of the Fourth International.

There were two occasions when the political cost of the LSSP's coalition politics with the SLFP became dramatically evident. The first was the LSSP's embrace of the SLFP's Sinhalese-Buddhist communalism during 1965–70 to oppose the new UNP government's policy of granting language rights to the Tamil minority while agreeing to offer them a limited measure of regional autonomy. Until this communalist shift, the LSSP, and the left movement in general, had maintained an honourable record of defending ethnic minority rights amidst rising Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism of which the SLFP had been a main actor. In 1966, the LSSP abandoned this legacy of pluralism and anti-communalism by joining the SLFP-led communalist mobilization

20 G. J. Lersky, 'Twilight of Ceylonese Trotskyism', *Pacific Affairs* 43, 3 (1970), pp. 384–93 at p. 384.

against the Senanayake–Chelvanayakam Agreement. It was this agreement that constituted the basis of the UNP government's new policy of addressing Tamil minority grievances. This compromise the LSSP made with majoritarian Sinhalese nationalism marked the beginning of a phase of Sri Lankan politics in which the left's presence in Tamil society began to irreversibly erode. Since the 1970s, the presence and political influence of the LSSP and CP came to be confined to Sri Lanka's Sinhalese-majority provinces. Some of the ethnic minority radicals shifted their loyalties to New Left groups that continued to abide by the Old Left's anti-communist politics. Many others joined Tamil nationalist insurgent groups when the Tamil nationalist armed struggle began to take shape during the late 1970s.

The second occasion was the formation of the United Front Government by the SLFP–LSSP–CP coalition in July 1970. The coalition's break-up in 1975 saw the LSSP being ousted by the SLFP leaders of the government. For five years, the LSSP's key leaders had played a decisive role in shaping the character and policies of the regime. N. M. Perera was the minister of finance who spearheaded the government's aggressive development strategy designed to promote a framework of state capitalism which was presented in ideological terms as building socialism. Colvin R. de Silva was the minister in charge of designing a new constitution for the country, with the objective of laying the legal foundations for a 'sovereign' and 'socialist' republic. There were a few other LSSP ministers and deputy ministers in the new 'socialist' government. The LSSP leaders seem to have taken seriously this new opportunity to reshape the nature of Sri Lanka's state, the country's economic and social policies, and the path of development. However, the global economic crisis of the early and mid-1970s, caused by the Middle East oil crisis, made the LSSP-led socialist experiment most unpopular and unsuccessful, pushing the regime into a crisis, which was further sharpened by a growing power struggle between the LSSP and the SLFP leadership, which had begun to make a right-wing shift. Meanwhile, de Silva's 'socialist democratic' republican constitution established a highly centralized state as well as a government framework with no checks and balances or institutions of accountability, making the United Front regime semi-authoritarian. The LSSP, with its mistaken belief in its new role as the co-author, along with the statist-capitalist SLFP, of Sri Lanka's socialist development by parliamentary means, ultimately paid for the government's failures by being forced out of the coalition regime in 1975.

The ultimate price the LSSP had to pay for its coalition experiment of 1970–5 was the electoral defeat it suffered at the parliamentary election held in

July 1977. The United Front regime had become so unpopular that neither the LSSP nor the CP could retain a single seat, while the SLFP managed to secure only 8 seats in the 168-member legislature. The UNP, which had been in opposition for seven years with only 17 seats, won the election with 140 parliamentary seats. That was an unprecedented five-sixths parliamentary majority for a ruling party. It also marked a decisively right-wing shift in Sri Lanka's politics as well as popular electoral choices. For the LSSP, the 1977 parliamentary election outcome marked the end to its long political career as an independent political and intellectual force spread over the late colonial and post-colonial periods of Sri Lanka's modern history.

The LSSP after 1977

The LSSP leadership's attempts to revive the party's role as an independent socialist party during the period after 1977 did not meet with much success. The death of N. M. Perera, the only surviving founder leader of the party, occurred in 1979. Colvin R. de Silva, Perera's deputy for many years and the architect of Sri Lanka's 1972 constitution, became the new party leader. A leading criminal and constitutional lawyer, de Silva enjoyed a great measure of intellectual prestige among the urban professional and elite circles, but very little support among the workers, the youth, and the rural peasantry. The party's trade union base, youth leagues, and organizational networks had also been weakened, and that was a price the LSSP paid for being a ruling party in the coalition government with the SLFP for five years from 1970 to 1975.

Other than the LSSP's decline as a conventional socialist party with exclusively parliamentary and trade union orientation, Sri Lanka's Trotskyist movement had also been divided into several small parties and groups. The great split occurred in 1964 when the LSSP's decision to form a coalition government with the SLFP had led to more subsequent splits. The first major dissident group to be formed in 1964 was the LSSP (Revolutionary) or LSSP(R), and a large number of radical and youth activists went along with the new party. However, the LSSP(R) too suffered splits due largely to theoretical and personal disputes. Disputes among these groups also reflected the factional struggles in the world Trotskyist movement and the affiliates to the Fourth International in Europe and America. The Mandeliste Fourth International in France, the Militant Group in London, the Healyite Workers' Revolutionary Party in London, and the Spartacist Group in the United States had their branches or affiliates in Sri Lanka. All of them had

their political origins in the LSSP(R) formed in 1964. These radical and revolutionary versions of the Trotskyist movement too failed to make any headway in Sri Lanka's socialist politics.

Meanwhile, the LSSP, after its disastrous electoral setback of 1977, tried to revive itself politically by returning to the arena of parliamentary politics. The LSSP fielded Colvin R. de Silva as its candidate at the presidential election held in 1982. There was another LSSP candidate, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, representing the New Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), a radical breakaway group from the LSSP. Both LSSP candidates fared very poorly, de Silva polling just 0.88 per cent of votes cast and Nanayakkara still less, a mere 0.26 per cent.²¹ This disastrous electoral setback compelled the LSSP and the small left parties to form a broad left electoral coalition. Consequently, six small left parties, including the LSSP and NSSP, formed the United Socialist Alliance (USA) and contested the presidential election of 1988. The Socialist Alliance managed to improve its electoral support by polling 4.63 per cent of the votes. Although it was a better electoral outcome, still the left had to accept that it was a marginal electoral force, with no chance of winning parliamentary seats or regaining its lost popular appeal.

This realization seems to have compelled the LSSP and the CP to revive the alliance with the SLFP. The reality was that the political survival of the left as parliamentary parties had to depend entirely on the backing of the SLFP and the revival of the alliance which the LSSP and CP had abandoned in 1975. The SLFP too needed the left support to win elections and to bring back its social welfarist and state-capitalist ideology. The formation of the People's Alliance in 1993 saw the revival of the left–SLFP coalition politics. It is this coalition arrangement that has continued to enable the leaders of the LSSP and CP to get themselves elected to parliament and also find places in the cabinet of ministers.

The LSSP and the 'New Left'

Three factors seem to have provided the immediate context for the emergence of Sri Lanka's New Left during the mid- and late 1960s: (a) the collapse of the efforts to form a united socialist front in 1963; (b) the LSSP's coalition strategy with the SLFP in 1964 and the resultant split of the party; and (c) the breaking up of the CP into two parties, one Stalinist pro-Moscow and the other Maoist, in 1964. There were three strands of the Sri Lankan New Left

21 H. B. W. Abeynaike, *Parliament of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Lake House, 1988), p. 1.

that evolved during the post-1964 period. The first consisted of the radical Trotskyist groups, all of which had their origins in the LSSP. Their main grievance with the LSSP was that it had abandoned socialism, Marxism–Leninism, and Trotskyism, and betrayed the working class and revolution to embrace a capitalist party for opportunistic goals. The second strand was Maoist, the main entity of which was the Communist Party (Peking Wing) formed in 1964 as a rival communist party. Subsequently, several splinter Maoist groups emerged, operating underground with a commitment to a Chinese-type peasant revolution in Sri Lanka. The third strand was the left-nationalist New Left, represented by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front), which had its origins in the Maoist CP.

Among all the New Left groups in Sri Lanka, the JVP was the group that took the idea of revolution seriously and launched two armed insurrections seeking to capture state power, first in 1971, and then in 1986–9. The JVP's political ideology was a combination of Marxism, Maoism, and Sinhalese nationalism. The JVP as an underground revolutionary movement since 1966 succeeded in attracting students, young workers, and political activists from both the LSSP and the CP. When the JVP made its first attempt at an armed revolution in April 1971, the LSSP was a member of the United Front coalition government. The LSSP's extremely hostile response to the JVP and its insurgency also reflected the relationship of enmity that had developed between Sri Lanka's 'Old Left' and the 'New Left'. While the United Front government crushed the JVP insurgency by military means, resulting in many deaths, disappearances, and imprisonment of rebels as well as civilians, the LSSP adopted a particularly hardline approach to the insurgency. N. M. Perera, the LSSP's leader and government minister of finance, described the JVP in a speech made in 1971 as 'stalking-horses' of the reactionaries.²² Colvin R. de Silva denounced the JVP as a movement of 'ultraleft adventurists'.²³

The LSSP's Rise and Decline: Contexts and Reasons

As implied in the above account, the history of the LSSP seems to have evolved through five phases, each of which had a specific context. The context

22 N. M. Perera, 'Text of Inaugural Address at the Twenty-Seventh Annual Session of the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science', in C. Gunaratna (ed.), *Dr N. M. Perera Birth Centenary Publication* (Colombo: Dr N. M. Perera Center, 2004), p. 168.

23 C. R. de Silva, 'April 1971: A Foredoomed Ultra-leftist Adventure', in W. Muthiah and S. Wanasinghe (eds.), *Colvin R. de Silva: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Colombo: Young Socialist Publications, 2007), p. 193.

of each phase also contains factors that contributed to the rise as well as decline of the party as a socialist and anti-systemic political movement. The five phases are: (a) the colonial context (1931–48); (b) the immediate post-independence context (1948–60); (c) coalition politics during the 1960s and 1970s; (d) the economic liberalization of 1978 and after; and (e) the ethnic conflict and civil war. Invariably, these five phases have some chronological overlapping.

The Colonial Context

It was during the last stage of British colonial rule in Ceylon that the LSSP first emerged as a broadly social democratic social reform movement and then transformed itself into a revolutionary socialist movement. Through these radical activities – anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-elitist, and pro-poor politics of resistance – the LSSP redefined the very idea of politics in colonial Sri Lankan society.

The Second World War provided an unanticipated context as well as impetus for making the LSSP a more radical socialist movement during the early and mid-1940s. The conservative politics of Sri Lanka's mainstream nationalist movement lacked any anti-imperialist or anti-war political content. The repressive political conditions that existed during the war propelled the LSSP into open anti-colonial politics. The LSSP's proscription by the colonial government had the unintended consequence of sending the party underground, exposing its leaders to radical movements outside Sri Lanka. It also radicalized new groups of educated youth as well as urban workers. Thus, the 1940s marked the last years of colonial rule in Sri Lanka as well as the formative phase of the LSSP and Sri Lanka's left. It was during this formative phase that the LSSP embraced Trotskyism, affiliated itself with the Trotskyist Fourth International, established firm organizational roots in the trade union movement, acquired its distinctly working-class identity, and cut its political teeth in parliamentary politics.

The Immediate Post-Independence Context

The period from 1948 to 1963 was a phase of lost opportunities for the LSSP, which remained the largest left party, having the strongest trade union and youth league base among all political parties. It also had a team of dedicated parliamentarians highly skilled in parliamentary debate as well as political education and propaganda. Yet the LSSP stagnated in terms of its

parliamentary strength. Its leaders failed to transform the party into a broad socialist movement, beyond the urban working class and constituencies of urban and educated professionals. Over-reliance on this narrow social base was also the reason why the LSSP leaders failed to build a strong rural support base among the peasantry. The rural peasantry, the majority of whom were the poor, landless, and middle peasants, continued to provide the core support base of the two 'bourgeois' parties, the UNP and the SLFP. It was the SLFP that after 1956 successfully recruited the rural Sinhalese peasantry, particularly poor and middle peasants, as one of its strongest electoral and ideological constituencies. The SLFP's ideology of Sinhala nationalism and the policy commitment to social welfarism were the main reasons that attracted the Sinhalese peasants as its most reliable electoral base. Thus, the LSSP's failure was the SLFP's gain.

The rise of the SLFP as an alternative to the right-wing and elitist UNP also had the unintended consequence of its developing into an alternative to the LSSP as well. Philip Gunawardena, who left the LSSP in 1951 and later joined the SLFP to form the MEP coalition in 1956, seems to have had the foresight to understand this emerging threat, but not the LSSP, which had a more orthodox Trotskyist and textbook analysis of Sri Lanka's changing political realities. Ironically, Gunawardena's coalition politics with the SLFP ended in failure long before the LSSP was to experience a similar outcome two decades later. The rise of the SLFP as an alternative bourgeois ruling party with a centre-left policy agenda and Sinhalese nationalist ideological identity acted as a key obstacle for the LSSP, not allowing it to broaden its social bases, electoral constituencies, and voter support.

One strategy that remained open to the left in dealing with the SLFP was for the left to come together and form a united front. The combined strength of the LSSP, CP, and Revolutionary LSSP during the late 1950s and early 1960 would have laid the foundation for an effective third force in Sri Lankan electoral politics, making the left stronger in bargaining with the SLFP for progressive socio-economic reforms. It is in this context that the collapse of the initiative for a united left front in 1963, for which the LSSP leadership was responsible, also contributed to the rapid decline of the LSSP as a socialist force in Sri Lanka.

The Coalition Context

Coalition politics seems to have had a dual significance in the LSSP's history. First, it was an attempt to move away from the orthodox Trotskyist

preoccupation with socialist revolution and in turn to be politically innovative in seeking an alternative strategy to advance a reform agenda in alliance with other class forces. Secondly, coalition politics led to the erosion of the LSSP's autonomy as a working-class, socialist party and made the LSSP superfluous and eventually irrelevant as an agent of social and political transformation in Sri Lanka. The political cost of coalition politics has been enormous. After the 1970s, the party has not been able to recover from the loss of its working-class, socialist, and radical identity. The transition of both the LSSP and the CP to the status of partners of a government, as managers of the state as junior partners to a capitalist party, robbed both parties of their political role and popular appeal as representatives of the working class and the governed. This led to another process, the de-radicalization of the working class. It in turn enabled the UNP and the SLFP, the two leading capitalist parties, to dominate the field of trade union politics. In brief, coalition politics subverted the very political *raison d'être* of both the LSSP and the CP.

The LSSP's leaders and cadres became government officials and state functionaries in coalition governments, creating a new logic of de-radicalized politicization. A key feature of this shift is the LSSP's adoption of a statist approach to politics in which the Sri Lankan state under the management of the coalition regime, of which the LSSP was an influential member, viewed the state as the main instrument to be used for Sri Lanka's socialist development. The 1972 constitution, conceptualized and drafted by the LSSP's minister of constitutional affairs, Colvin R. de Silva, embodied this statist understanding of socialist politics in Sri Lanka. The 1972 constitution broke away from liberal constitutionalism and incorporated elements of socialist constitutionalism. The socialist constitutionalist features that de Silva and the LSSP introduced anew to Sri Lanka's constitutional structure were: (a) a unicameral legislature with no checks and balances on its legislative sovereignty; (b) concentration of executive authority in the cabinet of ministers with no limits to executive power, or checks and balances; (c) a judiciary and public service under the control and supervision of the cabinet of ministers; and (d) the absence of a justiciable charter of civil and political rights. The LSSP's statist transformation during 1970–5 thus saw the once-radical socialist party identifying itself as a ruling-class entity to manage a capitalist economy and society in crisis. This seems to have effectively ended the party's anti-systemic and anti-establishment credentials as well as its appeal, marking also the end of the LSSP's political radicalism and legitimacy as a party that stood by the citizens as opposed to the ruling-class elites. The LSSP's loss of all its parliamentary seats at the election of July 1977 in

a way reflected the fact that the progressive voter constituencies in Sri Lanka had not only deserted the LSSP, but also punished it.

The Context of Economic Liberalization

The economic liberalization of 1978 by the UNP government significantly altered the political economy and social conditions that had given birth to the LSSP and the left parties as radical, working-class movements. The left's trade union politics as well as electoral politics had evolved since independence primarily in the context of welfare capitalism in which the left parties were the main bargaining link between the state, capital, and the unionized working class. Economic liberalization that promoted export-oriented manufacturing industry through free trade zones as well as the services sector altered the nature of the new working class through fresh recruitment to the labour force. Most of the new labour remained un-unionized due to new labour laws as well as the temporary nature of employment contracts. Similarly, young rural men and women who joined the labour force in the newly established manufacturing and export-oriented industries were generally not exposed to the working-class culture of unionization or collective class action. The entry of the ruling party, the UNP, into trade union politics, primarily in the public sector, as part of its strategy of corporatist and clientelist control of labour led to rapid de-radicalization of labour and the eventual shrinking of political space for the left parties. The dwindling of the trade union base of the LSSP that began during the early 1980s paralleled the party's general decline as a political force of any vitality.

The Context of Ethnic Conflict

Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, which became militarized after 1983, seems to have worked against the LSSP in two ways. First, because of the LSSP's endorsement at times of the SLFP's communalism, the progressive and left-wing Tamils abandoned the party. The civil war contributed to the intensification of ethnic identity politics, leaving very little space for class-based socialist politics.

However, to the credit of the LSSP, CP, and other small Trotskyist groups, during the civil war period they all stood for the rights of the Tamil minority citizens, agitating for a negotiated political settlement to the ethnic conflict at the risk of becoming marginalized in the highly communalized electoral politics.

Conclusion

As this chapter's account shows, Sri Lanka's LSSP emerged, developed, and declined in a set of specific historical contexts. When the party was formed, colonial Sri Lankan society was ripe for the radical politics of dissent and resistance. Meanwhile, events during the Second World War enabled the party to mature into a serious anti-colonial political entity, capable of capturing the emancipatory popular imagination. The resistance to the colonial state and interventions it made for social justice, equality, and socio-political transformation during the 1930s and 1940s marked a radically new framework of modernity as well. That eventually enabled the LSSP to build a legacy of a formidable intellectual force. The LSSP's decline was partly self-made and partly an outcome of structural factors embedded in the post-colonial social, ideological, and cultural change in Sri Lanka.

Ironically, the LSSP leadership's decision to align itself to 'petit bourgeois' forces in an attempt to move away from its own intellectual and cultural elitism produced multiple negative outcomes. Experiments through parliamentary reformism by means of such alliances not only ended in disappointment, but also led to total isolation of an already alienated party from all radical currents in Sri Lankan society.

This chapter also sketched how the LSSP contributed to its decline as a political force. Factionalism, schisms, personality fights among leaders, ideological rigidity as well as compromises, and failed experiments in the reformist path to socialism apart, one key weakness of the LSSP is its social and intellectual elitism. Ernest Germain, in his critical review of the LSSP made in 1964 soon after the majority of the LSSP decided to join the SLFP to form a coalition government, noted how Sri Lanka's Trotskyist revolutionary party had not even translated the key Marxist–Trotskyist literature to vernacular languages. Thus, 'participation in the political life of the World Trotskyist movement, above all its internal political life, therefore remained limited to a minority of revolutionary leaders'.²⁴ When the revolutionary literature was translated into Sinhalese and Tamil later by the Maoist communists and the underground New Left groups, the radical social rebellions had moved away in a direction that the elitist LSSP theoreticians could only describe as 'counter-revolutionary' or 'reactionary'. Thus, the LSSP's decline is also a story of its intellectual stagnation as a socially and culturally elitist entity

24 E. Germain, 'Popular frontism in Ceylon: from wavering to capitulation', *International Socialist Review* 25, 4 (1964), pp. 104–17.

The LSSP since 1977 has survived as a small party with one or two MPs in parliament and one minister in the cabinet, conceded by its coalition ally, the SLFP, more in exchange for the progressive legitimacy it gives to the SLFP than for the votes it can bring at elections. However, even without its trade union base, working-class, or youth constituencies, the remnants of the LSSP continue to lend their voice against neoliberalism and communalism.

Further Reading

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African Socialism

EMMA HUNTER

In 1962 a conference was held in Dakar, Senegal. Its purpose was to discuss 'African socialism' and indeed to attempt to define what it was. This proved difficult to do, for in 1962 African political leaders of many and varied ideological positions used the term 'African socialism' to describe their vision and policies. But, although African socialism appeared to be the dominant ideology of early 1960s Africa, this dominance soon passed. Critics from the left accused it of not being sufficiently socialist, while critics from the right pointed to its shortcomings as a development strategy.

Many early studies of African socialism were written by partisans, first, predominantly by those who shared a commitment to developing a socialism fitted to the needs of newly independent African states, later by those who were more critical. More recently, in the post-Cold War world, historians have returned to study socialism in mid-twentieth-century Africa. As the historians Gerardo Serra and Frank Gerits write, this involves 'shedding a preconceived and univocal notion of what "real" socialism looks like while making the ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions that characterised the historical experiences of these regimes an integral part of the story'.¹ This enables us to explore the question of what 'African socialism' meant to those who embraced a version of the term, but also to situate it within a deeper and broader history of socialism in Africa and beyond.

In this chapter, I shall first consider the concept of 'African socialism' and what it meant to those who employed the term or an equivalent, situating it in its mid-twentieth-century context. I then consider what the implementation of socialist policies and visions in the 1960s looked like in practice, through case studies of Ghana and Tanzania. I then turn to the critical voices

¹ G. Serra and F. Gerits, 'The politics of socialist education in Ghana: the Kwame Nkrumah ideological institute, 1961–1966', *Journal of African History* 60, 3 (2019), pp. 407–28 at p. 410.

heard then and since, before ending with some concluding remarks about the way in which the socialist ideas of that time continue to provide a resource for the present.

‘African Socialism’: A Genealogy

In the 1960s, a flurry of pamphlets and short books were published which had as their title ‘African Socialism’. These books proclaimed the dramatic birth of a new ideology. In a book published in 1964, for example, the American social scientists William Friedland and Carl Rosberg wrote: ‘[t]he present decade has seen the mushrooming of a new doctrine, largely unknown only five years ago, which African leaders call “African Socialism”. The expansion of writings on this subject surely marks one of the most rapid developments of an ideological orientation in recent times.’²

What was this new ideology? For Friedland and Rosberg, a crucial element was its foundation in African society: ‘The view of human nature underlying African Socialism rejects the individualistic philosophy of the West. The African Socialist holds a view of human nature which, he believes, rests on the fundamental characteristics of traditional society: classless, communal, and egalitarian. What is common to these characteristics is the concept that only inside a given society can the individual fulfil himself, that the society gives him shape, form, and cohesion.’³ This, Friedland and Rosberg continued, had implications too for how capitalism was conceived of, for the proponents of African socialism defined capitalism ‘not simply as private ownership of the economy but as the kind of human relationships that individual ownership can produce. Private ownership, insofar as it heightens individual ambition and produces a desire for personal gain, destroys those characteristics in African society that are most highly prized.’⁴ For Friedland and Rosberg, African socialism was important as an explicitly post-colonial ideology which would unite people in the way that anti-colonialism had before independence.⁵

This broad definition has proved to be powerful and tenacious, and so in a recent synthesis Michael Jennings similarly defined African socialism as

2 W. H. Friedland and C. G. Rosberg, Jr, ‘Introduction: The Anatomy of African Socialism’, in W. H. Friedland and C. G. Rosberg, Jr (eds.), *African Socialism* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1964), pp. 1–11 at p. 1.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 9. They continued: ‘Yet it is vital to realize that the African Socialist argues that this “alienation” is not only an essential feature of capitalist society but equally common in communist society.’

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

'characterized by an emphasis on communitarian values (as opposed to a class-based discourse more characteristic of European socialism), a strong emphasis on social development, and on the importance of creating egalitarian societies'.⁶

To return to the books and essays of the 1960s, the writers of these publications were often invested in the ideas they were writing about. Some were writing from within newly independent countries, others wrote from outside and saw in Africa a space where socialism could thrive, and disappointments that had been experienced elsewhere could be overcome. For example, the British Labour MP Fenner Brockway wrote in 1963 that 'it is not too much to say that the most dynamic socialist movement in the world today is in Africa. It is the most comprehensively revolutionary continent. All of us, whatever our views, must recognise its significance.'⁷

The term 'African socialism' was, at this point, capacious enough to include both Julius Nyerere's ujamaa villagization in Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah's industrial strategy in Ghana (discussed below). But by the second half of the 1960s and into the 1970s more critical voices were raised against 'African socialism', which was set against a rival, 'scientific' socialism. From having seen African socialism as a new hope for the history of socialism, both observers and participants came to question what, if anything, was truly socialist about it and how far it could achieve meaningful change in post-colonial societies. For some, even to use the term 'socialism' to describe the policies of Nkrumah and others was unhelpful, since they were better understood as nationalists.⁸ And increasingly it seemed that the solutions to contemporary challenges would not be found within any one nation-state. In the later 1960s and 1970s, activists and researchers were increasingly preoccupied with the pressing question of why, in spite of national independence, Africa's place in the global economy remained marginal within a profoundly unequal world. For the historian Walter Rodney, whose book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was published in 1972, this question could not be answered from within an individual country or indeed within the African continent, but rather by exploring 'the relationship between Africa and

6 M. Jennings, 'Ujamaa', in T. Spear (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia in African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also G. Martin, *African Political Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); A. H. Wingo, 'Philosophical Perspectives on the History of African Socialism', in Spear (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia in African History*.

7 F. Brockway, *African Socialism* (London: Bodley Head, 1963), p. 17.

8 A. Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

certain developed countries and in recognizing that it is a relationship of exploitation'.⁹ For others, it demanded radical action within states, and the Ethiopian revolution of 1974 brought the growing power and attraction of Marxist–Leninist ideas into the spotlight.¹⁰

African Socialism in Context

Why was the cluster of ideas which were labelled 'African socialism' for a while so compelling? To answer this question, we might think about why, across the world in the period in which many African states became independent, democratic socialist ideas were attractive to anti-colonial activists and intellectuals, some of whom became the leaders of new states. Socialist ideas resonated for a set of reasons which went to the heart of anti-imperialist thinking and the challenges of building a new post-colonial world.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, anti-imperialist thinkers had argued that imperialism was fundamentally an economic phenomenon that drained wealth from the colonized world to the West. For many, it seemed axiomatic that capitalism itself was at fault, serving metropolitan economies but not the needs of colonized peoples. At the same time, within colonized societies intellectuals criticized the ways in which the growth of capitalism was fracturing societies and communities.

The twentieth-century world was characterized by growing inequality, internationally and within states. As C. A. Bayly has emphasized, increasing inequality should be understood not just in the sense of income inequality, but more broadly, including 'differentials based on inherited status, ethnicity, race and so-called tribe'. This, Bayly reminds us, was inseparably tied to a history of imperialism, for 'a critical force in generating these forms of inequality was the legacy of the nineteenth-century European empires and the informal "empire" of Western commercial and ideological dominance that followed their demise'.¹¹

In this context, socialism offered a language for the moral critique of capitalism and a powerful vision of a post-colonial future. And in contrast

9 W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Black Classic Press, 2012 [1972]), p. 22.

10 B. Zewde, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Student Movement, c. 1960–1974* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014); E. Centime Zeleke, *Ethiopia in Theory: Revolution and Knowledge Production, 1964–2016* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); M. Ottaway, 'Soviet Marxism and African socialism', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 16, 3 (1978), pp. 477–85.

11 C. A. Bayly, *Remaking the Modern World 1900–2015: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), p. 3.

to Marxism or communism, mid-twentieth-century varieties of democratic socialism were able to articulate criticism of capitalism in a religious idiom and embedded in particular contexts.

African socialism should therefore be seen in the context of wider trends in twentieth-century anti-imperialist thought. There were clear synergies with ideas forged in other parts of the decolonizing world and articulated by those addressing similar challenges who adopted languages of Asian socialism, Islamic socialism, and Arab socialism. This was partly because activists and intellectuals were responding to a shared experience of European imperialism.

But it was also because ideas were forged in part through exchange. This was a time characterized by the mobility of both ideas and people. Michael Jennings has described the way that ‘many of these leaders had been strongly influenced by socialist ideas during periods of study in the home nations of European colonial powers, in Russia, and in the United States, and had received support from left-wing socialist organizations during the nationalist struggle against colonial occupation (e.g., the Fabian Colonial Bureau in the United Kingdom)’.¹² Networks linking individuals across the Global South were also extremely important in forging a shared Afro-Asian anti-imperialism.¹³ Recent historical writing on the 1950s has emphasized the mobility of trade unionists and political activists, shining the spotlight on those below the level of the political leaders on whom earlier scholars focused. To take Ghana as an example, Kwame Nkrumah did not himself travel to the famous Asian–African Conference held in the Indonesian city of Bandung in 1955. But his compatriot Jim Markham did. The historian Gerard McCann has shown how Markham’s socialism was shaped by his travels through South-East Asia and the time he spent talking to socialists there. As McCann makes clear, the networks of which Markham was a part were specific to the environment of the 1950s. McCann writes, ‘The 1950s was a more open, permissive era when African freedom fighters traversed blurred state/non-state Afro-Asian, European, American and pan-African institutions . . . The very appeal of socialism was as much its internationalism as the nuance of its spectral ideologies.’¹⁴ This would become more difficult in the tighter environment of 1960s nation-building.¹⁵ Religious networks offered another form of mobility,

12 Jennings, ‘Ujamaa’.

13 C. J. Lee, *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010).

14 G. McCann, ‘Where was the Afro in Afro-Asian solidarity? Africa’s Bandung moment in 1950s Asia’, *Journal of World History* 30, 1/2 (2019), pp. 89–123 at p. 120.

15 C. Stolte, ‘Introduction: trade union networks and the politics of expertise in an age of Afro-Asian solidarity’, *Journal of Social History* 53, 2 (2019), pp. 331–47 at p. 344.

and within the international structures of both the Protestant and the Catholic churches decolonization and the shifting centre of gravity of the church away from Europe and towards Asia, Africa, and Latin America prompted new thinking about social justice and socialism.¹⁶

African trade unionists, writers, journalists, religious thinkers, and engaged citizens were part of these international circles and drew on globally circulating critiques of capitalism. But they also developed new and distinctive analyses. Building on their readings of Africa's past and its present, they engaged with socialist and anti-colonial thinkers from other parts of Africa and around the world as they reflected on how to repair the fractures wrought by colonialism and to build a new society.

They did so in a distinctively mid-twentieth-century context. Situating African socialist thought in the context of the 1950s and early 1960s requires that we consider contemporary ideas about 'modernity' and 'modernization'. While it soon became clear that theories of modernization did not provide a helpful guide to historical change, the reason such ideas were nevertheless powerful at the time was precisely because they held out the promise of 'modernity', one aspect of which was a vision of abundance associated with technological progress and prestige goods. It is important to remember the attraction at that time of these ideas, and of a vision of political independence as about not only reclaiming equal membership of a world of nation-states, but also having the chance to enjoy the fruits of modernity that had been denied under colonial rule.

One way in which we can recapture those mid-twentieth-century ideas of the modern is through how individuals sought to represent themselves in photographs, for example, in photographs taken by the Malian photographer Seydou Keita in his studio in Bamako in the 1950s and early 1960s. New kinds of prestige goods were taken as emblematic of the modern. Malians who went to pose for photographs chose to be pictured with objects that they saw as representing modernity, such as radios, telephones, and bicycles. By posing with those objects, they cultivated a particular image of themselves, and as Michelle Lamunière writes, 'expected to be identified with what they signified – visible proof of social success and urbanity'.¹⁷ Large-scale projects, such as the Akosombo hydroelectric dam in Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah's flagship project which promised to drive

16 U. Greenberg, 'The rise of the Global South and the Protestant peace with socialism', *Contemporary European History* 29, 2 (2020), pp. 202–19.

17 M. Lamunière, *You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 2001).

Ghana's industrialization, gave material content to these visions of modernity. As the historian Stephan Miescher writes of the Akosombo dam project, 'as the engine of Ghana's accelerated transformation' it 'would remind generations of how Ghanaians had not just removed the shackles of colonialism but created the conditions for a richer life in which they enjoyed the fruits of modernity'.¹⁸

In one sense, then, African socialism was, as the historian Emmanuel Akyeampong has emphasized, 'a search for an indigenous model of economic development', attractive to a generation that was critical of capitalism but at the same time anxious to distance themselves from communism, particularly in the context of the sharply driven battle lines of the global Cold War.¹⁹

Crucially, if socialism offered a compelling vision of the future, it could do so in both a secular and a religious idiom. Thinking about religion is important not just for understanding the socialism of the Senegalese political leader and intellectual Léopold Sédar Senghor, Julius Nyerere, and others, but also for understanding their stance in relation to communism. As Senghor wrote in 1960: 'The aim of Islamism and of Christianity . . . is to fulfil the will of God. For in order to fulfil this will, which is to gain heaven, we must achieve brotherhood among men through justice for all men here on earth. Indeed, what is this justice if not equality of opportunity given from the beginning to all men regardless of race or condition; and, along with work, the equitable distribution of national revenue among citizens, of world revenue among nations and finally, the equitable distribution of knowledge among all men and all nations?'²⁰

The entanglement of African socialism with the thought of the world religions was already remarked upon in the 1960s, for example, in George Bennett's 1964 review of Friedland and Rosberg's collection in which he took the editors and contributors to task for neglecting the importance of religion, writing 'Is it completely irrelevant that of the leading exponents of African

18 S. F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's baby": the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966', *Water History* 6 (2014), pp. 341–66 at p. 342.

19 E. Akyeampong, 'African socialism or the search for an indigenous model of economic development', *Economic History of Developing Regions* 33, 1 (2018), pp. 69–87 at p. 70; G. Austin and S. Broadberry, 'Introduction: the renaissance of African economic history', *Economic History Review* 67, 4 (2014), pp. 893–906; D. Speich, 'The Kenyan style of "African socialism": developmental knowledge claims and the explanatory limits of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History* 33, 3 (2009), pp. 449–66.

20 S. Bachir Diagne, 'Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal: The Evolution of a Project of Modernity', in M. Vatter (ed.), *Creating God: Sovereignty and Religion in the Age of Global Capitalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), pp. 102–14 at p. 103.

socialism, two, Nyerere and Senghor, are practising Catholics, while two others, Nkrumah and Mboya, have both been educated in part in Catholic schools? . . . Traditional Catholicism is as communitarian as is the African outlook.²¹

In the case of Senegal, Senghor's socialism developed in dialogue with the ideas of the young Marx and of the French philosopher and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.²² The Zambian leader Kenneth Kaunda was similarly impressed with Teilhard de Chardin, finding in his 1966 book *The Future of Man* support for his own humanism.²³ Distance from communism was often explained in religious terms. For example, in a 1964 press conference the Malian President Modibo Keita explained Mali's position in the following way: 'Mali and her leaders draw their inspiration for socialist construction from the theory of Marxism–Leninism. But we do not adopt its materialist philosophy and we do not adopt its atheism, because we are believers.'²⁴

Implementation

If African socialism was increasingly attractive in 1950s and early 1960s Africa, what did socialism mean in practice for those states that publicly committed themselves to creating a socialist economy and society? Paul Nugent has contrasted 'capitalist' and 'socialist' regimes in Africa, drawing out clusters of familial resemblances between those he groups as 'capitalist' and those he groups as 'socialist', and considering 'what practical difference it made when regimes opted for African socialism or attempted to indigenise capitalism'.²⁵ Broadly, he argues, socialist countries delivered more in terms of health and education in the early years after independence, while capitalist countries saw higher growth rates but also more inequality, and all struggled with the economic shocks of the 1970s.

But socialism looked very different in different settings. Policies that were adopted changed over time and were always contested internally. Let us turn now to examine the implementation of socialism through case studies of Ghana and Tanzania.

21 G. Bennett, 'African socialism', *International Journal* 20, 1 (1964/5), pp. 97–101 at p. 100; E. Foster, "'Entirely Christian and entirely African": Catholic African students in France in the era of independence', *Journal of African History* 56, 2 (2015), pp. 239–59.

22 S. Bachir Diagne, *Postcolonial Bergson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

23 K. Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa: Letters to Colin M. Morris from Kenneth D. Kaunda* (London: Longman, 1966), p. 20.

24 F. G. Snyder, 'The political thought of Modibo Keita', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5, 1 (1967), pp. 79–106 at p. 86.

25 P. Nugent, *Africa since Independence: A Comparative History* (London: Red Globe Press, 2012), p. 203.

Ghana

What did socialism mean in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, from independence in 1957 to Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966? The short answer is that it meant different things to different people, and that policies shifted over time, as Nkrumah worked to build an independent nation and deliver on the expectations of Ghana's citizens. From 1959, Nkrumah increasingly emphasized the role of socialism in the ideology of the Convention People's Party (CPP), both for Ghana and for Africa as a whole, even more so from 1961.²⁶ He developed an ideology of 'Nkrumahism' for Ghana, to be taken forward through a one-party state, and sought to develop a socialism for Africa as a whole. In his foreign policy, he was increasingly open to working with the USSR and the Eastern Bloc states, but, as Nana Osei-Opare emphasizes, was ever conscious of the dangers of neo-colonialism and of 'being recolonized by another white superpower', and so sought to ensure that Ghana remained in control of these relationships.²⁷

Addressing a CPP study group in 1961, Nkrumah said that 'Socialism is the only pattern that can within the shortest possible time bring the good life to the people.'²⁸ This was the way to bring the promised fruits of independence. For Nkrumah, rapid industrialization was essential, and needed to be underpinned by reliable electricity supplies. This explains the importance he attached to the Akosombo dam, or Volta River Project, intended to supply cheap and reliable electricity. As he said in the same 1961 speech, 'Without energy we cannot lay the foundations of industrialisation. Industrialisation presupposes electrification . . . Hence my preoccupation with the Volta River Project and other schemes that will provide water power both for electricity and irrigation of regions that are starved of water at certain periods of the year.'²⁹

Much debate has focused on whether the economic policies of Nkrumah's Ghana should be understood as socialist or straightforwardly nationalist. And it is true, as Tony Killick points out, that Nkrumah's policies were in many ways in step with contemporary ideas about development planning, and not unlike policies followed elsewhere in Africa in states that did not describe themselves as socialist.³⁰ Even in the case of

26 T. Killick, *Development Economics in Action: A Study of Economic Policies in Ghana* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 38.

27 N. Osei-Opare, 'Uneasy comrades: postcolonial statecraft, race, and citizenship, Ghana-Soviet relations, 1957-1966', *Journal of West African History* 5, 2 (2019), pp. 85-111 at p. 87.

28 Biney, *Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 103. 29 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

30 Killick, *Development Economics in Action*, pp. 43-4.

Ghana's Seven-Year Development Programme of 1964, developed after Ghana's decisive turn towards socialism, a considerable amount of the drafting work was done by civil servants, and advice was taken from international development experts.³¹

But it also seems clear that Nkrumah was serious in his professed commitment to socialism as part of his wider commitment to overturning the unequal world order that European colonialism had created. It is true that at times Nkrumah's policies seemed to be at odds with his ideological commitments. This is particularly apparent in the case of the Akosombo dam project. At the same time as Nkrumah was lambasting neo-colonialism, he was committed to a project which depended on foreign capital.³² But the dam project went to the heart of Nkrumah's vision of creating a new Ghana. It would, as an editorial in the party newspaper proclaimed, enable the 'production of abundance and opportunity for all'.³³

The Akosombo dam was closely associated with Nkrumah, but the history of socialism in Nkrumah's Ghana is not simply a story of Nkrumah and his policies. New institutions such as the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute set up to research and teach socialism were spaces of argument, not of ideological consensus.³⁴ There is also a social and cultural history of Ghanaian socialism that stretches far beyond Nkrumah and his immediate colleagues and in which again socialism, nation-building, and independence were intimately entangled. Songs of that era explicitly linked building socialism with building a new Ghana. In one song recalled by historian Jeffrey Ahlman's Ghanaian interviewees, for example, they sang: 'I'm a socialist student; Building the Road; Building Socialism Road; We're apostles of the new Ghana; We're building the socialist road.'³⁵

Over the course of the 1960s, Nkrumah was increasingly criticized for his growing authoritarianism. Economically, Ghana faced the challenges of rapid population growth, which meant that even impressive levels of growth had to be shared more widely. In 1966, not long after the ceremony commissioning the Akosombo dam, Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup.

31 Ibid., p. 58.

32 Ibid., p. 43. His support for domestic private enterprise similarly seems to have been a pragmatic accommodation with businesses on whose support his party depended: Biney, *Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*.

33 Miescher, "'Nkrumah's baby'", p. 361.

34 Serra and Gerits, 'The politics of socialist education'.

35 J. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017).

Tanzania

With the fall of Nkrumah in 1966, many saw the future of African socialism, and indeed of socialism in Africa, as lying with the Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. Nkrumah's long-time friend and ally C. L. R. James wrote that following Nkrumah's overthrow, there had been decline 'until Dr Julius Nyerere came forward with Tanzania's Arusha Declaration in 1967 ... Today, the forward movement in Africa is headed along the lines of Dr Nyerere's policies.'³⁶

What, then, were Nyerere's policies? In Tanzania (until union with Zanzibar in 1964, Tanganyika), Julius Nyerere and the ruling party, TANU, which he led followed a path similar to that followed by Kwame Nkrumah. From the beginning, socialism was part of TANU's governing approach, entangled with nation-building as a part of its vision to remake society after independence. The Arusha Declaration of February 1967, and the series of policy announcements that followed, is typically taken as Tanzania's decisive turn towards socialism. The Tanzanian government enacted a package of measures, including key nationalizations and a shift of emphasis from industrial development to the rural sector, with the ujamaa village at the heart of this vision of rural development. Ujamaa, a Swahili word with a sense of 'familyhood' but employed in Tanzania to denote African socialism, became the governing party's dominant ideological framework.

As in Ghana, though, this did not mean a univocal ideology. For some, socialism should entail a radical package of measures. Just a week after Tanganyika's independence in December 1961, a lengthy article in the ruling party TANU's newspaper *Uhuru* called for all to be able to eat their fill in independent Tanganyika. This was a principle of equality: 'if we laugh we should all laugh, if we cry we should all cry'.³⁷ This was, the author continued, a policy known overseas as 'Kisoshalista' or 'socialism'. The author called on his readers not to be frightened by the word 'socialism', for 'socialism has been present in Africa since the creation of the world', even before foreigners discovered the word, and this socialism was evident whenever the person with the bigger farm called upon his neighbours to help him farm it. The article outlined concrete policies required to achieve socialist ends, including government leadership of the economy and nationalization of land, but also focused on the moral aspects of socialism. Socialism was, he

36 C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (London: Allison & Busby, 1977), p. 214.

37 'Wewe ule na mimi nile', *Uhuru*, 16 December 1961, p. 3.



Fig. 20.1 Tanzanian women of the Vijiji Vya ujamaa village cultivate the soil, 15 October 1974. (AFP via Getty Images.)

argued, a policy aimed at removing 'human greed'. It was also a politics of 'justice', one present in the soul of 'anyone who has ever been oppressed'.³⁸ But while writers in the pages of *Uhuru* understood socialism to be fundamentally concerned with equality and ending oppression and exploitation, elsewhere we see 'socialism' defined in different terms, with strong echoes of the Fabian socialism that influenced some post-war colonial officials as well as Tanganyikan politicians who participated in the networks created by the Fabian Colonial Bureau from Julius Nyerere to chiefs such as Thomas Marealle.³⁹

Nyerere's ujamaa African socialism went some way to bridging these ideological differences. Nyerere insisted that capitalist values were becoming too rapidly entrenched, and he wanted to set things back in the right direction. He complained about the 'anti-social' effects of capitalism as wealth was increasingly accumulated by individuals. We see this theme

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ C. Jeppesen, 'Making a Career in the British Empire, c. 1900–1960', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2013, pp. 179–86; T. Molony, *Nyerere: The Early Years* (Oxford: James Currey, 2014), p. 95.

both in his 1962 article, which first set out his thinking about ujamaa, and later in the 1967 pamphlets which accompanied the Arusha Declaration.⁴⁰ He sought to re-order relations between rich and poor so that they would no longer be founded on exploitation. But he firmly rejected a Marxism that he believed to be inappropriate in a Tanzanian context and that he condemned for its atheism. In his thinking, Nyerere drew on an older discourse present in the printed public sphere in Tanganyika from at least the 1930s, which expressed concern that a form of capitalism was developing in East Africa that was endangering society. When the East African Royal Commission visited East Africa in the 1950s, charged with creating an individualized economic model, it is striking that many of the Tanganyikan groups that gave evidence to the Commission shared a concern that the growth of the market in twentieth-century Tanganyika posed a risk to social relationships, and that the answer did not lie in economic liberalism.⁴¹

In contrast to Nkrumah's Ghana, Nyerere's Tanzania rejected industrialization in favour of rural development. This was not to be rural development through the mechanized agricultural policies that had been tried and found wanting in Tanganyika's first, World Bank-inspired development plans in the early 1960s. Rather, it was a vision of rural development coupled with a commitment to self-reliance. Instead of privileging secondary education for the relative few, Tanzania focused on adult mass literacy campaigns and primary education for all.

Nyerere's ujamaa was harnessed to a broader project of Tanzanian nation-building. Domestically, the language of ujamaa allowed him both to address conservative fears that society was breaking apart and, at least initially, to draw in those who sought more radical revolutionary change.⁴² Externally, African socialism served as a way for Tanzania to tread a non-aligned path, engaging with democratic socialists in the West as well as self-proclaimed socialists and communists in the East, particularly in China. This forging of new connections can be traced through the material world as well as through networks of individuals. The environmental historian Emily Brownell has

40 J. Nyerere, 'Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism', in J. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 162–71; J. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

41 E. Hunter, "'Economic Man in East Africa': Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Moral Economy in Tanzania', in B. Berman, A. Laliberté, and S. Larin (eds.), *The Moral Economies of Ethnic and Nationalist Claims* (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), pp. 101–22.

42 E. Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

shown how, for example, the turn from cement to bricks as a building material in post-colonial Dar es Salaam was not simply a shift from dependence on Western technology and assistance to self-reliance, but was also a turn to new international socialist networks of knowledge and support.⁴³

But as in Ghana, Tanzanian socialism was never precisely defined, and was characterized by contradictions. Why, for example, as the historian Laura Fair recently asked, would socialist Tanzania spend government money on a drive-in cinema? The answer, she finds, lies in the fact that the goal was to ‘achieve abundance’, but to do so ‘without the cutthroat antagonisms and inequalities associated with capitalism’.⁴⁴ And while TANU spoke of rural socialism, Dar es Salaam grew as quickly as other post-colonial capital cities.⁴⁵

While Nyerere had initially insisted that moving to Tanzania’s ujamaa villages should be a voluntary act, in the 1970s that changed. Under ‘Operation Vijiji’ (*vijiji* means villages) between 1973 and 1975 millions of Tanzanians were forced to move to new settlements.⁴⁶ The contradictions of TANU’s approach to gender also became more apparent, as Priya Lal has shown, as ujamaa seemed to reproduce colonial-era paternalism with a vision of individual self-reliance for men and work within the family for women.⁴⁷ Over the decade, Tanzanians suffered from a combination of poor harvests, economic challenges, and, finally, war with Uganda’s Idi Amin. In 1985, Nyerere stepped down as president, and Tanzania followed other countries in implementing structural adjustment policies and economic liberalization, followed in 1995 by a move to multi-party democracy.

Critical Voices

As these case studies make clear, socialist thought in Africa was always diverse, and the history of African socialism should be understood within that context. But over time, the ideological bricolage of an earlier period became more difficult, and increasingly over the course of the 1960s, when forced to choose between the capitalist West, on the one hand, and Marxist–Leninist ideas and

43 E. Brownell, *Gone to Ground: A History of Environment and Infrastructure in Dar es Salaam* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020).

44 L. Fair, *Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in Twentieth-Century Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), p. 222.

45 E. Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), ch. 1.

46 P. Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 3.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 102–19.

the communist East, on the other, radicals chose to opt for the latter. A good example of this trajectory is Senegal, where younger radicals criticized Senghor's African socialism and close relationship with France, calling instead for 'scientific socialism'.⁴⁸

Voices critical of 'African socialism' as a distinct political ideology became increasingly loud. Arguments in favour of a universal 'scientific socialism' had always been made, but were now put forward by those who had once themselves spoken of African socialism. In his own writings from exile in Conakry after being forced from office in Ghana in 1966, Kwame Nkrumah became dismissive of 'African socialism'. He wrote: 'All manner of red herrings are being used to distract and deflect us from our purpose. There is talk of "African socialism", Arab socialism, democratic socialism, Muslim socialism, and latterly, the "pragmatic pattern of development", their advocates claiming they have found the solution to our problems.'⁴⁹

For Nkrumah, writing in 1966, 'African socialism' as a term had become 'meaningless and irrelevant. It appears to be much more closely associated with anthropology than with political economy.' He declared:

'African socialism' has now come to acquire some of its great publicists in Europe and North America precisely because of its predominant anthropological charm. Its foreign publicists include not only the surviving social democrats of Europe and North America, but other intellectuals and liberals who are themselves dyed in the wool of socialist democracy. It was no accident, let me add, that the 1962 Dakar Colloquium made such capital of 'African socialism'; but the uncertainties concerning the meaning and specific policies of 'African socialism' have led some of us to abandon the term because it fails to express its original meaning and because it tends to obscure our fundamental socialist commitment.⁵⁰

Nkrumah now insisted that there was 'only one true socialism, scientific socialism, the principles of which are universal and abiding, there is only one way to achieve the African revolutionary goals of liberation, political unification and socialism', and for him that lay in armed struggle. Later scholarly studies of Africa's 1960's experiments with socialism followed in a similar

48 M. Swagler, 'Youth Radicalism in Senegal and Congo-Brazzaville, 1958–1974', unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2017, p. 16.

49 K. Nkrumah, 'The Spectre of Black Power', in K. Nkrumah (ed.), *The Struggle Continues* (London: Panaf Books, 1973), p. 35.

50 K. Nkrumah, 'African Socialism Revisited', reprint of an article in *African Forum* 1, 3 (1966).

vein, discussing how far these experiments did or did not conform to Marxist–Leninist orthodoxy, and generally finding them wanting.⁵¹

For the Zanzibari politician A. M. Babu, writing in prison in the 1970s in what became a book eventually published in 1981, there was similarly a stark choice to be made between capitalism and socialism. Babu was dismissive of Julius Nyerere's Tanzanian version of African socialism, ujamaa, which he characterized as backward-looking and romantic. For Babu, socialism 'has its own *raison d'être*. It is not Russian; it is not Chinese. It is not African, or Asian or European – it is proletarian. It is the only weapon in the hands of the workers and other oppressed classes. It is the only theory which they can use.'⁵²

There was, Babu insisted, no 'third way', only a choice between socialism and capitalism. 'We must face the issue squarely and make a choice: Is it to be socialism, which will ensure a quick and certain liberation and development of the masses; or is to be dependency and exploitation by the world capitalist system, ensuring our slow decline and eventual doom? There is no third way, no neutral choice. The oppressed African masses, like their counterparts elsewhere, have already declared that there are no choices, that socialism is inevitable and that it is the only answer to their misery.'⁵³

Others argued instead that, while claiming to respond to the realities of contemporary African societies, political leaders advocating African socialism had in fact misunderstood those realities. Strands of this argument are present in public debate in one of East Africa's leading periodicals, the *East Africa Journal*, which received a great many submissions in the immediate aftermath of the publication of Kenya's 1965 Sessional Paper on African socialism. An article by the economist Barak H. Obama, father of the future American president, challenged the claim made in the Sessional Paper that there was an absence of class division in Kenya.⁵⁴ Like Julius Nyerere and other Tanganyikans who had given evidence to the East Africa Royal Commission in the 1950s, Obama insisted that one of the results of colonialism was that such a class structure was in fact emerging. And in relation to the critical question of land, rather than simply saying that he rejected the trend towards individual tenure in the Sessional Paper and wanted communal

51 Serra and Gerits, 'The politics of socialist education in Ghana', p. 410.

52 A. M. Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* (London: Zed Books, 1981), p. 71.

53 Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?*, p. 72.

54 B. H. Obama, 'Problems facing our socialism', *East Africa Journal*, July 1965, pp. 26–33. This article is the subject of an article by David William Cohen, 'Perils and pragmatics of critique: reading Barack Obama Sr's 1965 review of Kenya's Development Plan', *African Studies* 74, 3 (2015), pp. 247–69.

tenure instead, he called on legislators to look in detail at actually existing forms of tenure and to think about what sort of system would work best for Kenya specifically, at that point in its history. For Obama, growing inequality was already a feature of Kenyan society, and legislators should respond accordingly. In a line of thinking that suggests engagement with Nyerere's thinking in Tanzania, he floated an idea of 'clan co-operatives', but also suggested that if the government did want to go down the individual tenure route, then it should consider limiting the amount of land any one individual could hold.

Others drew attention to the silences in discussions of African socialism, notably around gender. One example is a letter sent to the *East Africa Journal* on the subject of African socialism from a British-born female missionary resident in Kisumu in Kenya, Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye, who was strongly critical of what those who wrote about African socialism or proclaimed adherence to its principles were *not* talking about. She referred to the way in which 'the nursemaid system once provided an apprenticeship for girls in domestic work, so that work in a good home meant for them both sharing its benefits and being trained for a good marriage'. But, she said, far from having been brought up to date with the times, instead 'today it is often literal slavery, educated families getting cheap labour by taking in illiterate or primary school girls with the precise intention of *not* sharing either their skills or their standard of living, but making a distinction between the skivvy in the kitchen and their own children. As I understand it, a socialist system should be humane as well as efficient. We cannot have *slavery* and *socialism*.'⁵⁵ She returned to this theme in a longer article the following year titled, appropriately, 'Socialism in the Kitchen'. It ended in trenchant form, she wrote: 'Before we vote anyone in on a platform of social justice, we must first have a look at his kitchen.'⁵⁶

Yet the marginalization of 'African socialism' as a governing philosophy did not mean the disappearance of its constitutive ideas, some of which have recently resurfaced in new places. The anthropologist James Ferguson has recently explored the power of distributionist ideas in the twenty-first century, in contrast to a focus on production. In the long tradition of distributionist thinking, which Ferguson traces going back to Kropotkin, Ferguson explores the place of these ideas in the African socialist thinking of the 1950s

55 Letter from M. Oludhe-Macgoye, 'Is Our System Humane?', *East Africa Journal*, November 1965, pp. 5–7.

56 M. Oludhe-Macgoye, 'Socialism in the Kitchen', *East Africa Journal*, October 1966, pp. 17–21 at p. 21.

and 1960s, notably in the thinking of Julius Nyerere.⁵⁷ And as the example of public debate in the *East Africa Journal* makes clear, the history of socialism in Africa in the 1960s is wider than that of the ideas and policies which are typically grouped together under the label of 'African socialism'.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the development of African socialism as a powerful, though always contested, set of ideas and governing practices in the mid-twentieth century, situated within a wider history of socialism in Africa. The intellectuals and political leaders who espoused African socialism developed their ideas in dialogue with traditions of anti-imperialist thought and critiques of capitalism developed over the course of the twentieth century combined with analysis of the particular challenges that their societies faced in a profoundly unequal mid-twentieth-century world. Ideas were exchanged with fellow intellectuals and activists across the world, many of whom were facing similar challenges as they grappled with the legacies of European colonialism and developed similar sets of ideas.

From the later 1960s and 1970s, African socialism was squeezed out between the extremes of communism and 'scientific socialism', on the one hand, with socialists such as Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu from Zanzibar calling for 'scientific socialism', and the growing power of free market economics as a response to economic crisis, on the other.⁵⁸ The same legacies of colonialism and the pressures of post-colonial state-building in a Cold War world which made African socialism attractive also proved its undoing.

While the recent past has seen the revival of large-scale and ambitious development projects, the term 'African socialism' is rarely heard today. But the African socialism of those years was itself a moment in a broader and deeper history of socialism in Africa. And the ideas of that time have continued to matter in the years since, and continue to provide a resource for the present.

Further Reading

Babu, A. M., *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* (London: Zed Books, 1981).

Biney, Ama, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

57 J. Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 52–7.

58 Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?*

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Arab Socialism

ABDEL RAZZAQ TAKRITI AND HICHAM SAFIEDDINE

From the late nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War, socialism in the Arab world emerged as a political and economic aspiration espoused by sectors of the intelligentsia and fought for by radical movements, political parties, trade union formations, and student societies. By the mid-1960s, socialism assumed an almost hegemonic influence. Ideologically, it was adopted by Nasserism, the dominant Arab political current of the era; the two largest Arab nationalist political formations: the Ba'ath and the Movement of Arab Nationalists; and, of course, by a range of communist and socialist parties. Economically, socialism was proclaimed as the official system of the five most populous Arab countries: Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Sudan, and Syria, in addition to Libya and South Yemen.¹ It was further embraced by liberation movements extending from the Omani province of Dhufar on the shores of the Indian Ocean, through Palestine along the Mediterranean, and all the way to the Western Sahara at the edge of the Atlantic.

Deeply influential as it was, Arab socialism is regularly approached from a point of dismissal or discontent. Western governments and their conservative regional allies, along with capitalist ideologues and neoliberal technocrats, have long characterized it as a shackling ideology that ushered in several lost decades of arrested development. Popular religious movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, portray it as having reincarnated pre-Islamic *Jahiliya*, an age of ignorance and immorality. European and Arab liberals associate it with past and present governments that undermined freedoms, suppressed representative democracy, and elevated the security state.² In their analysis, the ills of the political order are detached from

1 Due to the vastness of this topic, analytical cohesion, and word count limitations, we focus on Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria.

2 Similar tendencies are also commonly found amongst the ranks of contemporary Arab democratic left currents. A voluminous recent example is Sh. Younis, *Nida'a al-Sha'ab: Tarikh Naqdi li al-Ideologia al-Nasseriya* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2012).

colonial and class contexts.³ As for orthodox Marxists, most view it as a form of economic reformism or state capitalism, seeking to limit rather than to abolish private property, and the more Eurocentric amongst them present it as an underdeveloped phenomenon falling short of European expectations.⁴ Even in the realm of iconography, Arab socialism is bypassed. A Nasser or a Ben Bella is far less likely to feature in the Western radical imagination than a Mao, a Ho Chi Minh, or a Castro.⁵ As for the old ideological proponents of Arab socialism, they have long retreated into 'left-wing melancholia', while the few governments that still carry its banner are socialist in name only.⁶

Too radical for some, too reformist for others, Arab socialism has few champions today. Yet it still has an enduring presence in contemporary affairs, if only in terms of its felt absence. Amongst new oppositional currents to capitalist globalization, particularly in previously socialist Arab countries whose governments embraced neoliberal paradigms, there is a revived interest in understanding what Arab socialism was, and how alternatives to the orders that have replaced it could be envisioned. Such an understanding, we insist, could be arrived at only through engaging with Arab socialism on its own terms, appreciating the specific histories that influenced its trajectory.

Coloniality and Nineteenth-Century Socialist Encounters

Let us start by positing a distinction between 'Arab socialism', which emerged in the 1940s in conjunction with the rise of pan-Arab nationalism and achieved state power, and 'socialism in the Arab lands' dating back to the nineteenth century. Both were profoundly informed by the colonial condition, but they responded to it in substantially different ways.

Initially, socialism arrived on the heels of colonialism. That was the socialism of European imperial adventurers and administrators rather than

3 For a further discussion of the colonial abuse of democratic space, see S. Salem, *Anticolonial Afterlives in Egypt: The Politics of Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 107.

4 Such critiques were especially common in the 1960s and 1970s. They not only took issue with economic policy, but also with its philosophical foundations. See for instance S. Akhavi, 'Egypt's socialism and Marxist thought: some preliminary observations on social theory and metaphysics', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, 2 (1975), pp. 190–211.

5 For example, not a single Arab figure appears to date in the Verso book series 'Revolutions'.

6 For the notion of left-wing melancholia, see E. Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

radical Arabs. Perhaps the first socialists to set foot in the Arab region were the utopian Saint-Simonians. Led by Prosper Enfantin, a score of them worked for a decade in Egypt between 1827 and 1837, and many more ended up in Algeria. Universalists in theory, they claimed that they had no interest ‘in chaining the Orient to the chariot of the Occident’ but were rather inviting it ‘to share the throne of the world’.⁷ In practice, however, they energetically contributed to fettering Arab societies with the chains of colonial rule, ultimately serving the cause of European capitalist expansion.⁸ Their presence reflected the advance of European military and economic colonization as well as serious early nineteenth-century local attempts, like that of Egypt’s Muhammad Ali Pasha, to catch up with European industrialization. These attempts had a limited proletarianizing impact due to their short life-span.⁹

Collective workers’ struggles did take place. The 1827 Qala’a factory strike and the 1836 iron workers strike were early examples.¹⁰ This resistance did not end with the retreat of state-led industrialization. The demands of the 1882 Suez coal-heavers strike were endorsed by Urabi’s revolutionary government but reversed after the British occupation.¹¹ Nevertheless, persistent *acts of resistance* did not lead to the rise of a new textually and institutionally codified *ideology of comprehensive radical change*. Local artisanal structures,

7 M. Chevalier, *Religion Saint-Simonienne. Politique industrielle et système de la Méditerranée* (Paris: Globe, 1832), p. 18.

8 Inspired by Muhammad Ali Pasha (to whom they referred as *Le Pacha Industriel*) and his enlargement of state intervention in the economy, Prosper Enfantin led the group that lived in Egypt, but their greatest influence was exerted subsequently in Algeria. Their campaigns ranged from advocacy, through the Société d’Etudes du Canal de Suez, for the construction of a waterway that was to become a major site of colonial competition and an artery of capitalist trade, to playing an active role in the French *mission civilisatrice*. Their socialism had little to do with Arabs (and the Amazigh in the case of Algeria), except as objects of development and governance. For a detailed examination of their enmeshment in the French colonial project, see O. Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

9 For instance, the Alexandria naval arsenal (est. 1829), had, at the peak of its production, a workforce of 9,000 people and the cannon factory (est. 1820) at the al-Qala’a arsenal in Cairo had 1,500 workers. This is not to mention a host of other military production lines, more than thirty textile factories established by the end of the 1830s, three major sugar mills and refineries, two glass factories, a dairy products factory, steel and iron factories, a large fez production plant, a paper mill, a press, and many other institutions utilizing modern machinery operated by a labour force engaged in processing, manufacturing, and war industries. See A. Al-Jirtli, *Tarikh al-Sina’a fi Misr fi al-Nisf al-Awal min al-Qarn al-Tasi* ‘Ashar (Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif fi Misr, 1952), pp. 52–65, 117.

10 Ibid., pp. 112–13, 138.

11 Z. Lockman, ‘“Worker” and “Working Class” in Pre-1914 Egypt: A Rereading’, in Z. Lockman (ed.), *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 71–110 at p. 84.

belonging to a vibrant ancient guild tradition, represented the interests of craftsmen in each sector. These guilds played an important social and political role until their gradual demise in the early twentieth century, but they never advocated seizure of the means of production or a radical overhaul of society.¹²

At any rate, guilds did not represent the majority of the population, which was still tied to the land, having yet to experience the alienation of labour on the scale seen elsewhere. While feudalism had long been on the retreat in Europe, land concentration and absentee landlordism were expanding across the Arab region, encouraged by 'reforms' such as those introduced in the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. Given the fact that the majority of people tilled the soil, the foremost social challenge was the peasant rather than the proletarian question.

In the light of these structural realities, socialism was initially encountered via a textual, rather than a social movement, route. Socialist vocabulary entered the Arabic lexicon in the last third of the nineteenth century, at least three decades before socialist movements were led by Arabs. In 1878, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, a non-socialist, coined the current standard word for socialism, *al-ishtirakiyya*, whose linguistic root connotes sharing, participation, and partnership.¹³ Other thinkers of his age used the word *al-ijtima'iyya*, engaging in a more literal translation of the French term *socialisme*, and reserving the term *ishtirakiyya* to refer to communism.¹⁴

Already in the 1870s, some distinctions were made between revolutionary and reformist socialist currents, informed by contemporary events. The radical demands of the 1871 Paris Commune, whose events left an indelible mark on a range of *Nahda* (Arab renaissance) authors proficient in French, were particularly influential in this regard. A prominent journalist, for instance, referred to the communards as *al-Ijtimay'oun al-Ibah'iyoun* (the permissive socialists) and *ghulat al-Hurriya* (the zealots of liberty or liberal zealots).¹⁵ As for the actual content of socialism, it was understood *inter alia*,

12 For an elaborate discussion of these guilds and their relationship to new forms of organizing, see J. Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863–1914* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

13 He did so while covering Russian radical movements in his Istanbul-based newspaper, *al-Jawa'ib*. See F. Traboulsi, 'Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1804–87): The Quest for Another Modernity', in M. Weiss and J. Hanssen (eds.), *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 175–86 at p. 179.

14 See, for instance, 'Ayuhah Ghani Tah'athar', *al-Muqtataf*, 1 November 1888, pp. 78–83.

15 These terms were used, for example, by Adib Ishaq in his 20 January 1881 eulogy of Louis Blanqui. In Ishaq's usage, *ghulat al-hurriya* were distinguished from *ahl al-hurriya*

depending on context and author, as social reform (ranging from welfare provision to class levelling), an emphasis on collectivity as opposed to individuality, liberality in moral affairs and sharing in economic ones, co-operation and mutuality, as well as government regulation and redistribution of production, wealth, and resources.

Even in this textual realm, socialism was met with resistance from three main quarters. Liberal republicans like Adib Ishaq promoted the revolutionary principle of 'equality' but rejected its association with class struggle.¹⁶ Proponents of *laissez faire*, such as the editors of *al-Muqtataf*, initially rejected socialism on economic grounds as well as on the basis of a defence of property rights.¹⁷ As for champions of Islamic reform, like al-Afghani, they put forth a fundamental spiritual and moral argument against socialism while recasting it in a religious light.¹⁸ Al-Afghani, for instance, innovated the pre-emption of socialist influence by reportedly asserting that socialism was a Muslim principle that was practised in the era of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁹

More sympathetic treatments, like that of al-Kawakibi, the renowned Aleppan philosopher and agitator, continued to exemplify engagement on the part of public intellectuals rather than movement praxis.²⁰ A more secularly framed engagement was taking place in other *Nahda* circles, particularly amongst thinkers who hailed from Bilad al-Sham (Greater Syria). In

(the people of liberty, or the liberals). See N. Alloush (ed.), *Adib Ishaq. Al-Kitabat al-Siyassiya wa al-Ijtima'iya* (Beirut: Dar al-Talia'a, 1978), pp. 295–6.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁷ Publications like *al-Muqtataf* and *al-Hilal* took that line for much of the *fin-de-siècle*, eventually changing their position and adopting a more sympathetic tone in the early twentieth century. See I. Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 37–43.

¹⁸ This small tract – occasioned in part by the controversies arising out of Darwin's evolutionary biology – was written in Farsi and translated into Arabic by Muhammad Abduh, the renowned modernizing Egyptian sheikh of al-Azhar. See J. al-Din al-Afghani, *al-Rad 'ala al-Dahriyyen*, trans. M. Abduh (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Mahmoudiya, 1935) (original Persian published in 1879), pp. 56–8. For further context, see M. Kohn, 'Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilisation', *Political Theory* 37, 3 (2009), pp. 398–422.

¹⁹ See J. al-Din al-Afghani, *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Hussaini al-Afghani: Ara'a wa Aqwal*, ed. al-Makhzumi and M. Pasha (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shurouq al-Duwalliya, 2002 [1933]), pp. 159–70. For a different assessment of al-Afghani's approach, see S. A. Hanna, 'Al-Afghani: A Pioneer of Islamic Socialism', *Muslim World* 57, 1 (1967), pp. 24–32 at p. 25. We obviously disagree with Hanna's claim that al-Afghani was a socialist pioneer. For the anti-communist dimension in al-Sibai's Islamic socialism, see the concluding paragraphs of his book on the subject, essentially comparing the greatness that Islam brought with the degradation that communism seeks to bring. See M. al-Siba'i, *Ishtirakiyat al-Islam*, 2nd edn (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiya, 1960), pp. 231–3.

²⁰ Al-Sayid al-Furati [Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi], *Umm al-Qurra* (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Misriya bi al-Azhar, 1931 [1898]), p. 53. For a discussion of Kawakibi and socialism, see K. S. al-Husari, *Three Reformers: A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), pp. 73–8.

some quarters, there was a fascination with socialism as an avenue of scientific intervention into the realm of human organization.²¹ In others, there was an interest in socialism as a vehicle for building a just society. Farah Antoun's 1903 *Religion, Science, and Money*, for instance, offered a fictional account whereby the workers, the capitalists, the intellectuals, and the clergy present their positions on the social question. In this narrative, the representative of the workers explicitly endorses Karl Marx's ideas.²²

Antoun's reference to Marx was one of the earliest in Arabic that associated socialism with his philosophy. That was not coincidental given the growth of the Second International at the *fin de siècle*. Yet there was no organized Arab representation at the International, and the modest contact between its parties and the Arab lands was limited to members of a European diaspora that had arrived on the heels of British and French imperialism.²³ As much as it had to do with the relatively small size of the industrial proletariat, this Arab, and indeed general Afro-Asian, absence on the Second Internationalist stage also had to do with the weakness of pull factors.

The Second International was, in its organizational composition at least, a European phenomenon and its constituent parties and movements did not invest heavily in the idea of spreading socialist organizing in Afro-Asian lands. The likes of Rosa Luxemburg displayed an immense awareness of Eurocentric othering and its actual concrete colonial function.²⁴ But such awareness had to contend with a powerful current that had advocated socialist varieties of colonialism, and in some cases, Zionist settler-colonization. Emptied of moral critique in the name of anti-utopianism and opposing idealist deviation, socialist colonial discourse – as was abundantly clear in the debates of the 7th Congress in Stuttgart and elsewhere – endorsed colonialism as a progressive civilizational force. In this atmosphere, there were no Arab socialist parties during the era of the Second International, unless one counts Muhammad Jamal al-Din's Blessed Socialist Party (est. 1908), perhaps the earliest Arab organization to have socialism in its

21 This was exemplified by Sh. Shumayyil. For his socialism, see Khuri-Makdisi, *Eastern Mediterranean*, pp. 42–3; A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 [1962]), pp. 248–53.

22 F. Antoun, *al-Din wa al-Ilm wa al-Mal* (Cairo: Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, 2012 [1903]), pp. 32–3.

23 A similar pattern could be detected with relation to anarcho-sindicalist networks, which had achieved serious grounding amongst Italian and Greek communities in Cairo, Alexandria, and elsewhere, but had a tiny Arab presence. For anarchist networks, consult Khuri-Makdisi, *Eastern Mediterranean*, pp. 94–135.

24 R. Luxemburg, 'Peace Utopias' (1911), in R. B. Day and D. Gaido (eds.), *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 456.

name.²⁵ All indications suggest that this was a fleeting political formation with no lasting consequence.

The Birth of Socialist Movements, Trade Unions, and Parties: 1908–1948

The twentieth century quickly ushered in new economic and political transformations, resulting in a substantial expansion of the working class, the growth of an associational life connected to it, and the concurrent development of its consciousness in various Arab countries. It was not until the Ottoman Constitutional Revolution of 1908 that unions were able to properly form and operate in the Ottoman areas outside Egypt. In that year, 104 strikes were recorded across the empire, some of them witnessing creative acts such as the disruption of trains near Aleppo.²⁶

There is little evidence, however, of socialism establishing deep roots within Arab labour movements at this early stage of their history.²⁷ When the Egyptian author Salama Mousa authored his pamphlet *al-Ishtirakiyya* in 1913, he still felt that the structural conditions for the rise of socialist movements were not yet ripe, restricting himself to enlightening ‘public opinion about socialism’s nature’.²⁸ The earliest unions that represented local workers often emerged out of anti-colonial rather than socialist aspirations. These included the Manual Trades Workers Union, *Niqabat ‘Ummal al-Sana’i’ al-Yadawiyya*, founded in 1909 by the Egyptian Watani (patriotic) Party. As far as we know, this was the first modern labour body to use *Naqaba* in its title. Currently well established as the standard Arabic term for ‘union’, this word borrowed from the older guild tradition, effectively legitimating modern labour organizing with reference to an ancient institution known across the Islamicate.²⁹

25 K. Abu Jaber, *The Arab Ba’th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. 5.

26 D. Quataert, ‘Ottoman Workers and the State, 1826–1914’, in Lockman (ed.), *Workers and Working Classes*, pp. 21–40 at p. 31.

27 To be sure, foreign socialist and anarchist organizers, particularly Greeks and Italians, played a major role in the creation of such bodies as the short-lived Cairo-based Tobacco Rollers Association (1899) and subsequent associations established to represent tailors, law clerks, and other workers. Although becoming more visible, such organizations were predominantly, although not exclusively, representative of migrant European labourers. R. Abbas, *al-Haraka al-Umaliyya fi Misr, 1899–1952* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-‘Ala li al-Thaqafa, 2016), p. 60.

28 S. Mousa, *al-Ishtirakiyya* (Cairo: Hindawi, 2012 [1913]), p. 7.

29 Lockman, “‘Worker’ and ‘Working Class’”, p. 90.

Attempts at endowing the Arab trade union movement with a more socialist orientation, and at establishing socialist parties, gained immensely from the victory of the 1917 October Revolution. The Second International's schizophrenic outlook on colonialism and imperialism was replaced by a more consistent condemnation of both phenomena. More importantly, a concerted effort was launched to create communist parties in Africa and Asia. But promising calls, like Sultan Galiev's, to create a 'colonial international' went unheeded. At the 1920 Baku Eastern Congress, organized by the newly founded Third International (Comintern), only 3 Arabs were present out of nearly 1,900 participants.³⁰

Nevertheless, the Comintern's foundation was a turning point in Arab socialist history with concrete results. This was reflected in the establishment of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation in 1921 by Marxist figures seeking approval from the Comintern. Out of this experience there emanated the first major socialist party in the region: the Egyptian Socialist Party. The discourse of the party was markedly reformist in its origins and had Fabian as much as Bolshevik influences. For instance, one of its theoreticians, the aforementioned Salama Musa, was committed to a peaceful transition to socialism. He announced that his party 'wished success for the Bolsheviks in their great experiment', but that it was committed to 'gradualism' as opposed to revolution. Musa went as far as saying that 'I believe it is possible for us to convince a large number of well-intentioned wealthy people of the supremacy of socialism over capitalism.' The renowned author May Ziadeh responded to him in her characteristically probing prose: 'One wonders: what will happen if that large class of wealthy people were left unconvinced?'³¹

This debate over peaceful and revolutionary socialism led to the expulsion of Fabian socialists from the Egyptian Socialist Party. The entirety of the Arab world, save for the Saudi state and the Yemeni imamate, had become formally or informally colonized following Ottoman defeat in the First World War. Now that one of the world's great powers had declared itself a union of socialist republics, had further announced its opposition to colonialism, and was seeking to expand the socialist international well beyond Europe, it induced a gravitational pull to socialism within colonized areas like the Arab region. Despite this allure, early local sections of the Third International did not gain paramouncy within the Arab liberation

30 J. Pennar, 'The Arabs, Marxism, and Moscow: a historical survey', *Middle East Journal* 22, 4 (1968), pp. 433–47 at p. 434.

31 M. Ziadeh, 'Al-Musawa', 5: al-Ishriakiya al-Silmiyya', *al-Muqtataf* 59, 6, 1 December 1921, p. 566.

movement. Several causal factors have been historically highlighted. One is the hostility of the religious establishment, which had launched, especially after the 1917 October Revolution, major attacks against 'Bolshevism'. These included the official fatwa of 2 July 1919 issued by the Mufti of Egypt denouncing Bolshevism as a 'modern cult' whose roots date back to Mazdakism.³² At the time, it was widely suspected that this fatwa was issued with British nudging, publicized as it was not only in Egypt, but also in India. The fatwa was certainly in tune with official colonial policy, which encouraged, over the following decades, the introduction of a broad range of anti-communist laws across the Arab region. Governments under the colonial thumb passed legislation such as the 1925 laws in Egypt banning socialist publications and the 1948 Law No. 17 in Jordan, which was concerned with 'resisting communism' even before a communist party was established in that country.³³

Socialist currents faced another serious difficulty, namely, the dominance of liberalism in the 1920s. Throughout the interwar period, independence movements were infused with liberal economic and social ideas. Their leaderships – largely descending from the urban landed elite or rural notability – were focused on the expulsion of colonial forces rather than the complete overthrow of existing socio-economic structures and relations. The quest for independence endowed them with a great deal of legitimacy as well as mobilizational vitality. This was certainly the case for the leadership of the revolutions and revolts in Egypt (1919), Iraq (1920), Morocco (1921), Syria (1925), and Palestine (1936). Beyond launching repressive anti-socialist campaigns – such as the Egyptian Wafd's 1924 dissolution of the communist party and the arrest of its central committee members – several of the interwar nationalist leaderships used their greater resources and established legitimacy to achieve hegemony over working-class structures, severely limiting socialists from accessing their natural reservoir of cadres.³⁴

In the context of twentieth-century colonialism, any pursuit of socialism that was not grounded in anti-colonial politics was courting failure. The social question was intensely connected to the nature of the state. In the

32 See www.dar-alifta.org/AR/ViewFatwa.aspx?sec=fatwa&LangID=1&ID=15685&إسماعيل شرفي, last accessed 20 February 2021. On Mazdakism, see Touraj Daryaee, Chapter 1, in Volume I.

33 A. Q. Yassin, *al-'Haraka al-Shuyu'iyya al-Misriyya: al-Juthour, al-Qismat, al-Maal, 1921–1965* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya li al-Kitab, 2011), p. 17.

34 This took place in Palestine as well as in Egypt and elsewhere. See M. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919–1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010 [1979]), pp. 116–29.

imperialist metropolises, substantive change was envisioned as requiring – depending on the brand of socialism – the abolition, acquisition, or sharing of the state. The situation was different in the colonies: ultimate political authority did not reside in the local state, resting instead with the metropolitan centre that had formally or informally governed it. Contesting the colonial state was a vision that came to be embraced not just by a large mass of the peasant majority and growing urban proletarian minority, but also by a considerable section of the large land-owning class and the petit bourgeoisie. In other words, it had achieved a degree of national paramountcy in multiple locales.

Several Arab socialist currents emerged out of the communists' indecisiveness in engaging with these realities. The latter's limitations derived from their internal composition as well as their relationship to Moscow, which prevented them from adequately centring the colonial question. In Egypt, and more so in Palestine, communism was disproportionately spearheaded by European Jewish cadres. While communism in Syria/Lebanon and Iraq had Arab roots, its mode of operation was decisively shaped by the Comintern. This produced some major ironies. As Yassin al-Hafez once noted, the territories of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine had a great deal of ethnic and linguistic cohesion, and had, until 1917, been governed for centuries by a single Ottoman imperial state. Yet the Comintern did not push for the establishment of a single communist party to represent them. Instead, it facilitated or allowed the emergence of separate formations corresponding to popularly despised geographical divisions imposed by Britain and France. By contrast, the Comintern pushed for the creation of one party for Indochina, despite the historic national, ethnic, and linguistic demarcations separating Vietnam from Cambodia and Laos.³⁵ Thus, divergences eventually emerged among socialist currents that prioritized the project of Arab unification, currents that advocated shifting single-state national movements in a socialist direction, and communist parties that promoted local class struggle as well as anti-imperialist policies guided by the USSR.

35 The early Soviet disinclination to support Arab unification projects was not always shared by communists on the ground. In 1931, the communists of Palestine and Syria passed a resolution emphasizing that 'The Communists are duty bound to wage a struggle for national independence and national unity, not only within the narrow and artificial boundaries created by imperialism and the dynastic interests of certain Arab countries, but on an all-Arab scale, for the national unification of the entire East.' See 'The Tasks of the Communists in the All-Arab National Movement', in T. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 140.

By the 1940s, all of these currents had advanced. This was especially seen in Iraq after the British crackdown on Arab nationalists following Britain's invasion of Iraq in 1941, leaving a political vacuum that was quickly filled by the Communist Party. But it was also seen in Egypt. The Wafd's singular focus on the national question and failure to carry out serious agricultural or labour reform encouraged the development of more radical currents. Within the party, there emerged 'the Wafdist vanguard', some of its leaders calling explicitly in 1947 for 'state socialism', in accordance with which 'the state must now begin to seize the monopolies and the public facilities companies'.³⁶ Within the international socialist arena, members of such currents also played an important role in promoting anti-colonial struggles, such as the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 and the Palestinian cause. This was not an easy task. Within the Comintern, and within such formations as the League Against Imperialism, Arab figures faced a formidable conscious or subconscious Zionist presence, consolidated by persistent Orientalist attitudes.³⁷

Ultimately, the Soviet Union played a significant role in the legitimisation and arming of a settler-colonial state in Palestine. Not only did it marshal its diplomatic resources in support of the UN Partition Plan of 1947, but it also provided, through the Czechoslovakian arms deal of 1948, settler-colonist militias with the armaments they used to establish their sovereignty over the territory and to expel much of the Palestinian indigenous population. This caused a great deal of damage to communist prospects across the region. Needless to say, the majority of Arab communists, including the committed Iraqi Jewish cadres active in the League for Combating Zionism, opposed this policy, but were then forced to submit to Moscow's line.³⁸

Arab Socialism in the Anti-Colonial Age: 1943–1970

This tension between Moscow and local communist parties played a substantial role in the emergence of an Arab nationalist variety of socialism, as can be especially seen in the case of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party. This was the first party operating on a pan-Arab scale to combine socialism with

36 Quoted in T. al-Bishri, *al-'Haraka al-Siyasiyya fi Misr, 1945–1953*, 2nd edn (Cairo: Dar al-Shurouq, 2002), p. 300.

37 S. Tannoury-Karam, 'Long Live the Revolutionary Alliance Against Imperialism: Interwar Anti-Imperialism and the Arab Levant', in M. Louro et al. (eds.), *The League Against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020), pp. 107–34.

38 For a detailed examination of the role of Soviet dominance in weakening Arab communist parties, see Ismael, *Communist Movement in the Arab World*, pp. 17–41.

Arab nationalism, eventually instituting several socialist policies in Syria and Iraq. The two leading founders of the party, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, had encountered socialist movements during their studies at the Sorbonne and became fellow travellers of the Syrian–Lebanese Communist Party upon their return to Syria in 1933. But they became disillusioned with the Communist Party after the shift in its policy at the Seventh Comintern Conference and the establishment of the Popular Front government in France in 1936. Emerging from the underground, the Syrian–Lebanese Communist Party had become, as far as Aflaq and Bitar were concerned, more active in combating fascism in Europe than in fully confronting the colonialist agendas.

This encouraged Aflaq and Bitar to articulate an Arab nationalist theoretical framework that diverged from Marxism, all the while retaining socialist commitments. In 1944, Aflaq articulated the grounds on which he opposed Marxist communism, counterpoising it to socialism. In his view, communism was a byproduct of European as opposed to Arab realities, born out of the West's 'conflicting fanatic nationalisms, and its inflated industries'. In an Arab context, it was 'fighting non-existent illnesses' that distracted Arabs from their real problems: 'Communism wants to destroy nationalist fanaticism in a nation whose nationalism has not yet formed, fearing for other nations and global peace [from Arab nationalism] at a time when the Arabs are ruled by others.'³⁹

For Aflaq and his Ba'athist comrades, socialism afforded more favourable possibilities, as long as it assumed a particular Arab character. On this basis, the Ba'ath's first conference (1947) adopted socialism. The party's constitution stipulated that 'The Arab Ba'ath Party is a socialist party. It believes that socialism is a necessity emanating out of the core of Arab nationalism. It is the ideal system that allows the Arab people to achieve its potential and enables the full blossoming of that people's genius, guaranteeing rapid growth in the nation's moral and material production as well as close fraternity among its individuals.'⁴⁰

That formulation clearly subordinated socialism to the process of national formation, the former serving the latter. It was supplemented with the Ba'ath's commitment to tackling the social question in a manner that avoided alignment in the newly emerging Cold War, although the party took a decidedly more uncompromising stance in relation to the old colonial

39 M. Aflaq, 'Mawqifuna min al-Nathariya al-Shi'u'iya' (1944), in M. Aflaq, *Fi Sabeel al-Ba'ath*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1959), p. 279.

40 Constitution of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party (1947), Fourth Article.

powers Britain and France and their larger global ally the United States.⁴¹ A few months after the first Ba'ath conference, the Great Powers partitioned Palestine through the United Nations, and the settler-colonist militias of the Zionist movement began a sustained ethnic cleansing campaign. In response, the party advocated full Arab mobilization in support of the Palestinian Arabs and sent a volunteer unit led by Aflaq and Bitar. After the defeat, the party expanded substantially in an atmosphere that was described by Aflaq in the following terms:

The Israeli threat enhanced the spirit of liberationist and social revolution in general, as well as the spontaneous feeling of the people and its natural need for national unification in particular. In contrast, it pushed the ruling class (which is inherently separatist by virtue of its very presence and interests) towards greater submission to Western colonialism.⁴²

In this post-*Nakba* (post-Catastrophe) atmosphere, the Ba'ath's characterization of national liberation, Arab unity, and social revolution as being co-dependent was gaining broad currency.

This was an assessment shared by Akram Hourani, an MP from Hama who later merged with the Ba'ath, and who also spent time in Palestine as part of another Syrian volunteer force. In 1950, two years after his return from Palestine, Hourani founded the Arab Socialist Party. By then the ruling elite's suppression of the social struggle in the name of national struggle was becoming unsustainable. Despite growing urbanization, the majority of the Arab region's population belonged to the peasantry. Accordingly, the land question – emanating out of the severe concentration of ownership and the existence of oppressive landlordism in countries like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq – was felt with increasing urgency.⁴³ In 1943, Hourani was elected to the Syrian parliament on the platform of opposing the landlords and initiating land reform. Over the years, his agenda expanded to include the nationalization of monopolies, the provision of public goods, and the establishment of the welfare state, policies that were more effectively pursued after his merger with the Ba'ath Party in 1952.

In that fateful year, new developments were taking place in the Egyptian arena. The Free Officers, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and other army figures

41 Abu Jaber, *Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party*, p. 27.

42 M. Aflaq, 'Mawqifuna al-Siyasi min al-Shiyu' (1956), in M. Aflaq, *Fi Sabeel al-Ba'ath*, vol. IV, ch. 79, see <http://albaath.online.fr/Volume%20IV-Chapters/index-Volume%20IV.htm>, last accessed 1 February 2021.

43 A. al-Hourani, *Muthakirat Akram al-Hourani*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat Madbouli, 2000), p. 26.

who had fought in Palestine, launched a *coup d'état* on 23 July that was to change the course of modern Arab history in general, and Arab socialism in particular. That coup – initially referred to as the blessed movement and then as the July Revolution – was different from previous ones in the region, meriting the title revolution on at least three counts: it politically altered the nature of government, abolishing the monarchy and establishing an enduring republic in its place; it carried out major socio-economic transformations, particularly in the areas of land reform and nationalization of key industries and resources; and, through re-orienting Egypt's regional and global policy, it sponsored and encouraged anti-colonial revolutionary trends across the Arab world, the African continent, and the broader tricontinental sphere.

It has often been noted that, in their first year in power, the Free Officers had no blueprint for action, lacking any clear vision.⁴⁴ This view has been forcefully challenged in recent scholarship. As Reem Abou-El-Fadl notes: 'Analysing this period reveals the Free Officers' steady development of a connected critique of colonial rule, and the social injustice and political corruption of Egypt's political condition.'⁴⁵ While the Egyptian revolution did not raise the red flag, it definitely held the red rose. In its first three years, it identified three aims: 'the eradication of political despotism, the eradication of social injustice, and getting rid of the British occupation'.⁴⁶ Nasser's primary developmental aim was for Egypt to 'become an industrial power in the shortest possible time'.⁴⁷ This entailed focusing on a 'social unity' programme. Any form of independent class struggle was not tolerated, deemed a threat to productivity and to capturing the foreign capital that was desperately needed for funding industry. The lethal suppression of the workers strike at Kafr al-Dawar a few weeks after the revolution was a case in point. Socialism was not declared an objective in Nasser's speeches until April 1955, and, even then, infrequently until after 1961. As for the 1956 Egyptian constitution, it vaguely criticized aspects of capitalism and hinted

44 In the standard English-language study of the subject, Joel Gordon, for example, tells a story of a 'military coup organized by junior officers with unfocused goals and limited ambitions' that 'became, over the course of the following decade, a revolution from above that transformed Egyptian society and reoriented the way Egyptians looked at themselves and the world'. See J. Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4.

45 R. Abou-El-Fadl, *Foreign Policy as Nation-Making: Turkey and Egypt in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 101.

46 'Kalimat al-Bakbashi Gamal Abdel Nasser fi Um al Sharikat al-Taqteer', 27 March 1953, available at www.nasser.org/TextViewer.aspx?TextID=SPCH-13-ar, last accessed 10 December 2020.

47 R. W. Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 45.

at reform without committing to socialism.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, social policy took a more radical turn in subsequent years and this coincided with the growth of the socialist tide across the Arab world in the 1950s, a process that cannot be understood in isolation from Egyptian–Soviet relations. Soviet prestige grew immensely as a result of the combined impact of the 1955 Czechoslovakian arms deal, the USSR's funding of the Aswan High Dam, and Moscow's decisive intervention against the 1956 tripartite aggression launched by Britain, France, and Israel in the wake of Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal.

The ascendancy of Nasserism in the aftermath of Suez, which marked the beginning of the end of British colonialism in the region and the reinforcement of US imperialism, paved the way for radical changes across the Arab region, including in Iraq, Syria, and Algeria. In 1958, Iraqi officers inspired by the example of the Egyptian Free Officers overthrew the monarchy and set up the new republic. Whereas in Egypt the army was strong enough to remove civilian parties from the governing process, in Iraq the army needed support from major parties. It initially relied on the communists, which led to the early enactment of socialist policies. Despite the purge of communists after the 1963 Ba'athist coup, socialist policies continued to be passed in Iraq for much of the 1960s and 1970s.

As for Syria, the mid-1950s were characterized by the rapid growth of the communist and Ba'ath parties. Faced with internal competition with the communists and external national security pressures from NATO member Turkey in the north and the Israeli settler-colonial state in the south, the Ba'ath hastily sought unity with Nasser, resulting in the birth of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958. The Ba'ath and Nasser, however, clashed over power-sharing. Moreover, Nasser's socialist policies, including land reform and large-scale nationalization of industry, contributed to precipitating a coup that led to the break-up of the UAR in 1961. After a brief period of

48 The preamble to the constitution specified six goals: the eradication of colonialism and its collaborators; the eradication of feudalism; the eradication of monopolies and the control of capital over government; the establishment of a strong national army; the establishment of social justice; and the establishment of a correct democratic life. While some of these goals were open to socialist interpretations, relevant constitutional clauses were more concerned with *limiting* capitalist power, rather than abolishing capitalism. Article 7 demonstrated a commitment to economic planning that takes 'into account the principles of social justice', yet highlights the main goal of planning to be the 'development of production and raising the standard of living'. As for Article 8, it declared that 'private economic activity is free, as long as it does not harm the interests of society, or undermine the security of people, or assault their freedom or dignity': 'Dustour al-Jumhuriya al-Misriya', *Al-Waqa'i al-Misriya* No. 5, 16 January 1956.

economically liberal rule, subsequent governments led by the Ba'ath not only re-introduced, but also accelerated these socialist policies.⁴⁹

Nasser responded to the loss of Syria by shifting further to the left and officially embracing socialism. Earlier signs of this left turn had already been seen in Nasser's speech in Alexandria on the ninth anniversary of the revolution, and the government newspaper articles that appeared after it. Perhaps the most famous was Muhammad Hassanein Haikal's 'Communism and Us', in which he defined the main characteristics of 'Arab socialism' by articulating various ways in which it was different from communism. According to Haikal, Arab socialism, while concurring with communism on the existence of class struggle, proposed to solve the social question through dilution of class differences as opposed to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As for individual ownership, Arab socialism, unlike communism, distinguished between its exploitative and non-exploitative forms. Arab socialism further took the individual as its starting point, allowing for enterprise as long as it does not become transformed into exploitation of others. By contrast, he argued, communism grants the state full ownership and 'the individual is nothing other than a working tool that receives only what he needs to fulfill his basic needs'.⁵⁰

The non-Marxist undertones of such Nasserist visions do not take away from their relative radicalism, especially within a regional context in which governments had hitherto placed little or no limit on individual possession, and in which the state played a minor role in the provision of welfare or socio-economic protections for the peasantry and the working class. This radicalism became all the more evident after the Syrian secession. In December 1962, the Arab Socialist Union was established as Egypt's only officially sanctioned party. In June 1962, a Charter of National Action was adopted, proclaiming socialism 'as the way to social freedom'.⁵¹ In March 1964, a provisional constitution was passed, featuring multiple references to socialism. Article 1 announced that 'the United Arab Republic is a democratic socialist state based on an alliance of the people's labouring forces'. Article 3 defined the constituent social groups of this alliance as 'the peasants, the workers, the soldiers, the intellectuals, and the national capitalists'. Article 9 stipulated that the 'economic basis of the state is the socialist system, which prevents any form of exploitation, and which

49 For the rise and fall of attempts to reverse Nasserist land reform laws, see M. J. Barout, *Al-Takawun al-Tarikhi al-Hadith li al-Jazeera al-Suriya* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Arabi li al-Abhath wa Dirasat al-Siyassat, 2013), pp. 709–13.

50 M. H. Haikal, 'Nah'nu wa al-Shyoubiyya', *Al-Ahram*, 4 August 1961.

51 A. Abdel-Malek, 'Nasserism and socialism', *Socialist Register* 1 (1964), pp. 38–55 at p. 42.

guarantees the construction of the socialist society based on the two axioms of sufficiency and justice'. Other articles focused on the delineation of property rights, state provision responsibilities, the role of the public sector, economic planning and other areas pertaining to 'socialism'.⁵²

This was the second Arab constitution, after the Algerian constitution of 1963, to officially proclaim socialism. The latter arose out of a long anti-colonial revolution led by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). Having achieved national liberation, the FLN declared that it would carry out a social revolution. Thus, Article 10 of the Algerian constitution specified several 'main goals' of the republic: 'the construction of socialist democracy, combating the exploitation of the human being in all its forms, guaranteeing the right to work and free education, and the eradication of all the residues of colonialism'.⁵³

The Political Economy of Arab Socialism

As these constitutions illustrate, the ideas and policies applied in the Arab socialist experiments in Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere were by no means systematically Marxist–Leninist. Annouar Abdel-Malek's description of Nasserist economics as 'state capitalism with a socialist vocation' may well apply to all of them.⁵⁴ Yet the swift dismissal of these policies in some scholarly narratives – unlike in Abdel Malik's somewhat nuanced account – is all too common, and all too contemptuous. It is only fair that they be taken seriously on their own terms, and on the basis of the actual socio-economic changes they brought about. This requires challenging some implicit assumptions in modernization theory and Eurocentric Marxism, both of which underplay the socialist character of Arab political economies in the post-1956 period. Both traditions characterize economic transformation brought about by forces of national liberation as reformist rather than revolutionary. Modernization theory conceptualizes Arab political economy through the lens of developmental economics and the welfare state, while Eurocentric Marxism reduces Arab socialism to state capitalism. In their final analysis, however, endogenous variables such as state bureaucratization are largely blamed for the alleged failure of the socialist experiment.

52 al-Jumhuriyya al-Arabiyya al-Mutah'ida, 'al-Dustour', *Al-Waqa'i al-Misriya*, No. 69, Supplement 1, 24 March 1964.

53 al-Jumhuriyya al-Jazae'ria al-Dimunqratiyya al-Sha'abiyya, 'al-Dustour', 1963, available at www.majliselouma.dz/index.php/ar/2016-07-19-12-56-20/2016-07-19-13-25-03/1018-1963, last accessed 1 March 2021.

54 A. Abdel-Malek, *Nation and Revolution: Volume 11 of Social Dialectics* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 4.

It is undeniable that the state, Arab or otherwise, was the predominant and imperfect instrument of economic planning and activity in the age of national liberation. Nonetheless, state-centric approaches do not adequately account for colonialism as a structural feature of international political economy. Consequently, they fail to capture the historical specificity of state formation, structural adjustments, and central planning in a colonial, not merely capitalist, context. As a result, anti-colonial socialism during the era of national liberation, including its Arab variant, is dismissed as theoretically confused or reduced to political pragmatism.

Ideological proponents and historical agents of Arab socialism were aware of such claims, but they insisted on the particularity of their socialism based on their own social reality: namely, that they encountered capitalism as colonialism. Consequently, they stressed the centrality of national sovereignty as a pre-condition of economic liberation. Sovereignty was a pre-condition for total liberation from all forms of colonialism, including neo-colonialism, which was an indirect form prevalent after independence. As Kwame Nkrumah noted, under neo-colonialism, the newly independent state had 'all the outward trappings of international sovereignty'. In reality, however, 'its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside'.⁵⁵

This meant that class struggle differed from the conventional form of the proletarian revolution in capitalist Europe. Socialist revolution was inseparable from national liberation. Class struggle was waged against a structure of economic dependency as opposed to simply being conducted against a preformed social class.⁵⁶ Restoring the dignity of the masses was achieved through ending colonial expropriation, which meant the socialization of production vis-à-vis foreign capital and its local agents.⁵⁷ Orthodox communist as well as socialist Arab movements for liberation shared this view but disagreed on the best way to achieve it. Communists called for the total severance of links

55 This understanding of neo-colonialism is foregrounded in Kwame Nkrumah's classic study *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1965). For quotes, see *ibid.*, p. ix.

56 On the inseparability of class and national struggle in a colonial setting as articulated by Arab communists, see M. Amel, *Theoretical Prolegomena to the Study of the Impact of Socialist Thought on the National Liberation Movement*, 7th edn (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 2013), p. 472.

57 The FLN's Tripoli programme, for instance, described the Evian accords as neo-colonialism. It acknowledged that peasants are looking for profound social and economic reform, including the restoration of their dignity, of which they had been robbed by colonial expropriation. See J. J. Byrne, 'Our own special brand of socialism: Algeria and the contest of modernities in the 1960s', *Diplomatic History* 33, 3 (2009), pp. 430–2.

with capitalist institutions and markets.⁵⁸ In contrast, and as we saw above, Arab socialism in all its varieties tolerated private property as an institution but opposed its use as a means of exploitation.⁵⁹ Prices and markets were not the ultimate arbiters of capital accumulation and distribution. Personal gain had to be subordinated to public interest, with public-sector performance tied to increasing employment, economic activity in poorer regions, and the provision of affordable goods and services to the general population.⁶⁰

Seen from this angle, Arab socialism transformed the political economy of Arab societies in fundamental ways, even if it fell short of communist revolution or diverged from classical models of socialism. New laws and practices were introduced in the spheres of agriculture, industry, and finance. They impacted relations of ownership, production, distribution, and marketing. Key energy resources like hydrocarbons and subsoil minerals, as well as strategic transport capital, like railways and waterways, were brought under national ownership and operation. The profits they generated, which previously accrued in large part to foreign monopoly capital, were invested in public works and social welfare, or directed towards manufacturing as well as other state expenditures like defence and public wages.

By modernization theory's own standards, these measures led to high levels of sustained growth coupled with reduced income inequality. This outcome was never reproduced in the neoliberal age that followed.⁶¹ Independent unionism was suppressed, but the workers and peasants made unprecedented class gains. Public sector over-expansion did lead to problems of efficiency down the line, but the sector's role in socialist transformation was pivotal. Its institutions, like agricultural co-operatives, credit agencies, and industrial managerial boards, spearheaded social mobilization for accelerated growth. The technocracy that emerged was equally significant in its push for socialist change. The

58 For Arab communists, this delinking was an aspiration, rather than an immediately achievable objective. Despite its autarkic image, even a much larger and more heavily industrialized state like the USSR found it impossible to totally break from global chains of credit and markets. For a detailed study of this theme, see O. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

59 Nasser stressed the two principles of non-exploitative private property and equitable distribution of national output. See A. Alnasrawi, *The Economy of Iraq: Oil, Wars, Destruction of Development and Prospects, 1950–2010* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 61.

60 See M. Cammett, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2015), p. 240.

61 In Egypt, for example, growth rates in the 1960s hovered around 6 per cent while the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, declined from 0.61 in 1952 to 0.38 in 1965. On the Gini coefficient, see R. Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy: 1952–1972* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 71.

image of laconic administrators is a parody of the vibrant class of competent and committed bureaucrats and diplomats. Newly independent Arab states relied on Soviet educational aid and co-operation to replace colonial technocrats. Soviet support included the founding of research institutes in Arab countries and the sponsorship of Arab students at Soviet universities.⁶² Economic planners, including Western-educated experts, sought to build on or adopt Marxist theories of development to an Arab context. They included Oskar Lange and Mohammad Labib Shuqayr in Egypt, Michel Raptis and Suleiman Lotfallah in Algeria, Ibrahim Kubbeh in Iraq, and Abdallah Tariki in Saudi Arabia.⁶³

Agrarian Reform

Agriculture was the first sector to undergo transformations applied by such figures. The urgency of agrarian reform reflected the anti-colonial logic of socialism as a path to national liberation. Next to resource extraction, agriculture was the bedrock of colonial economic activity and therefore the strongest link in the chain of economic dependency. This can be seen in the four countries that we focus on here: Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Algeria. The reliance of these countries on large-scale farming of cash crops – cotton, dates, tobacco, and vines, respectively – created an export-oriented economy at the mercy of volatile world prices. It also diverted resources from industry, which distorted economic growth. Ottoman, Khedival, and colonial agrarian policy also gave rise to a class of big land-owners, both local and foreign, who increasingly acted as the agents of colonial rule under foreign occupation or neo-colonial rule after formal independence.

Agrarian reform was therefore a political as well an economic policy. Politically, the break-up of highly concentrated land ownership dealt a blow – in some cases gradual, in others sudden – to the landed colonial bourgeoisie

62 On the trope of administrative paralysis, see Cammett, *Political Economy of the Middle East*, p. 233.

63 On the Polish economist Oskar Lange and earlier Marxists like Sadek Saad and Ibrahim Amer, see A. Abdel Malek, *Egypt: Military Society* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 50, 109. Mohammad Labib Shuqayr held several ministerial posts like planning and the economy under Nasser and wrote on Arab economic unity, see Mohammad Labib Shuqayr, *al-Wihda al-Iqtisadiyyah: Tajarubuha wa Tawaqu'atuha* (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1986). Benbella assembled a circle of leftist advisers that included several foreigners, like the French-Greek Trotskyist Michel Raptis and the Egyptian Marxist bookseller Suleiman Lotfallah, see Byrne, 'Our own special brand of socialism', p. 433. Ibrahim Kubbeh was a professor of economics at Baghdad University and served as the first minister of economy after the 1958 revolution, see I. Kubbeh, *Dirasat Fi Tarikh al-Iqtisad wa al-Fikr al-Iqtisadi* (Baghdad: Irshad Press, 1970). Abdallah Tariki was Saudi Arabia's minister of oil, a co-founder of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), and a proponent of pan-Arabism and the slogan 'Arab Oil Is for the Arabs'. See A. Tariki, *al-'Amal al-Kamilah* (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2005).

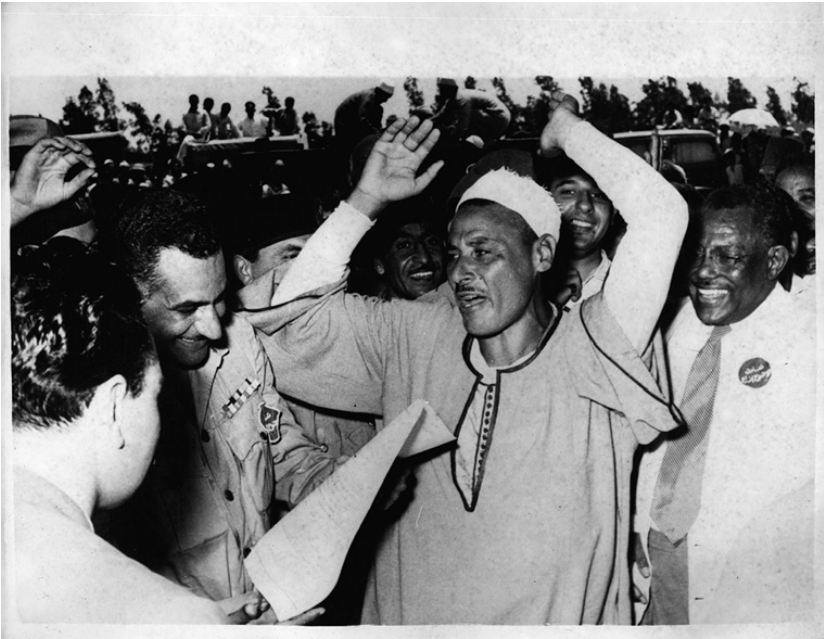


Fig. 21.1 Egypt 1954: Arab socialism turned hundreds of thousands of exploited peasants into land-owners. Transfers of title deeds were publicly celebrated. (Keystone Press/Alamy.)

while empowering medium-sized farmers and a segment of the landless peasantry. Economically, it permitted collective ways of organizing agricultural production and capital investment (Figure 21.1).

Across all four states examined here, reforms tackled the structure of ownership, tenancy arrangements, and farming practices. On the eve of the 1952 revolution in Egypt, an estimated 2,000 land-owners held close to 20 per cent of the country's total land, while at the bottom rung, 2 million owned a mere 13 per cent, which made them virtually landless.⁶⁴ Six weeks after the Free Officers took power, they enacted the first of a series of agrarian laws to address this inequality. On the expropriation side, these laws placed a ceiling on land ownership and offered compensation to original proprietors in the form of long-term and interest-bearing government bonds.⁶⁵ On the redistribution side, they tied tenancy rights to productive use of the land, outlined a monetized redistribution scheme of expropriated surplus land, and

⁶⁴ See Mabro, *Egyptian Economy*, p. 61.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 56; Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, p. 70.

created co-operatives designed to collectivize production, but not ownership, among small and middle-size farmers.⁶⁶ Subsequent laws and policy directives reduced the ceiling on ownership, rendered the terms of compensation less favourable, and improved the terms of acquisition for beneficiaries.⁶⁷ Under the new agrarian system, co-operatives were compulsory on agrarian reform estates and membership was later extended to other estates. The co-operatives took over the dual function, previously held by land-owners, of managing production – including the supply of credit, seeds, and fertilizers – and marketing output. They were organized in a top-down pyramidal fashion, with local co-operatives based on districts and grouped under a general association. A public official, often an agronomist, presided over a board that managed these co-operatives and was ultimately answerable to the ministry in Cairo.⁶⁸

The Egyptian model of agrarian reform inspired similar measures in Syria and Iraq. While the degree of mixed ownership in these two countries was relatively higher than in Egypt, nineteenth-century land registration practices by the Ottoman bureaucracy led to a high concentration of ownership coupled with immiseration of peasant life.⁶⁹ In Iraq, the British policy of empowering tribal sheikhs through land settlement strengthened resistance to land redistribution in the wake of the 1958 revolution.⁷⁰ The new reform law, enacted on 30 September 1958, stated as its first objective the elimination of ‘feudalism’ both as a mode of production and as a colonial asset that benefited the large land-owning class and their colonial patrons. Government machinery would cease to be under their political influence and serve instead the public interest: improving the living standards of the peasantry, and boosting the contribution of agriculture to national income.⁷¹ Under the new law, two different ceilings

66 Order of priority for granting land was tenants and permanent workers, farmers with large families, and the poorest members of the village; see Mabro, *Egyptian Economy*, p. 65.

67 In 1958, the annual interest rate on compensation was reduced from 3 per cent to 1.5 per cent and paid over forty rather than thirty years, while charges for redistribution were reduced from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. In 1961, the cap on private land ownership was reduced from 200 feddans to 100 feddans, and later to 50 feddans in 1969 (1 feddan is a little over 1 acre); see Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, pp. 76–7; Mabro, *Egyptian Economy*, p. 65.

68 On the structure and management of co-operatives, see Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, pp. 78–9; Mabro, *Egyptian Economy*, pp. 68–9.

69 On the lot of the peasant in pre-revolutionary Iraq, see J. Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq: 1932–1950* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 169–70. On the Syrian peasant, see H. Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Notables and Their Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 38.

70 On the revival of the power of sheikhs by the British, see R. M. H. Hashemi and A. L. Edwards, ‘Land reform in Iraq: economic and social implications’, *Land Economics* 37, 1 (1961), pp. 68–81 at p. 71; and Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq*, pp. 167–8.

71 Hashemi and Edwards, ‘Land reform in Iraq’, p. 75, nn. 26 and 28.

of 2,000 and 1,000 dunums were placed on ownership of irrigated and rain-fed land, respectively. Tenancy stipulations offered a clear division of labour between proprietor and tenant, collective bargaining was sanctioned, and co-operative societies were established along the lines of those in Egypt.⁷²

In Syria, major agrarian reform was initiated under the union with Egypt in 1958 and continued under the Ba'athists after succession from the UAR. The first ceiling on land ownership affected 1 per cent of land-owners, who held an estimated one-third of cultivated land. The irrigated plains across Hama and Homs as well as the al-Jazira region bore the brunt of the restructuring compared with the northern coast, the Ghuta gardens of Damascus, or the rain-fed plains of Hawran.⁷³ The peasant origins of the Ba'ath's new leadership of the 1960s onwards ensured a sustained policy of supporting agricultural production well into the beginnings of the global neo-liberal era of the 1970s. Farmers enjoyed lesser tax burdens, price subsidies, land reclamation, and material provisions in the form of seeds, fertilizers, and mechanization. Rural areas witnessed rapid electrification and the spread of safe water networks.⁷⁴ Syria became one of the most self-sufficient economies of the region, which reduced the risk of foreign economic intervention.

Algeria's FLN envisioned agrarian reform along similar but more radical lines. Differences stemmed from ideological radicalization during Algeria's prolonged armed struggle for independence, as well as the settler-colonist character of its land-owning class. No compensation was paid for estates acquired from colons or proprietors accused of treason and corruption. Mechanized farmland was not parcelled out, in order to preserve its productive capacity. More significantly, peasants took over abandoned estates in the wake of the mass exodus of colons following independence. The new occupants set up self-managed agricultural units. The FLN leadership blessed the move and hailed self-management as a continuation of the revolution. Algeria's first elected president, Ahmad Ben Bella, compared it to similar forms of socialist reform in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Co-operatives were initially controlled by peasants but were later brought under the fold of the state.⁷⁵ Public investment in rural infrastructure and a programme of building 1,000 'socialist villages' sought to increase agrarian production and reduce the rate of rural to urban migration.⁷⁶

72 Ibid., pp. 76–7. 73 Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry*, p. 32. 74 Ibid., pp. 63–7.

75 See K. R. Singh, 'The Algerian experiment in socialism', *International Studies* 8, 4 (1966), pp. 444–56 at pp. 447–8.

76 On rural investment and socialist villages, see J. R. Nellis, 'Algerian socialism and its critics', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 13, 3 (1980), pp. 481–507 at p. 492.

Nationalization

These agrarian reforms were partial, yielding mixed social and economic results. They moreover targeted colonial economic exploitation indirectly, undermining the land-owning class whose interests often intersected with the interests of Western capital. The nationalization of strategic assets like the Suez Canal and natural energy sources like oil, however, was a direct attack on imperialist forces, namely, Western governments and corporations. Consequently, the stakes were higher and the confrontation more violent. Like other anti-colonial forces across the world, Arab revolutionary regimes considered control over strategic national resources a matter of political as well as economic sovereignty. No large-scale economic development was possible in the absence of such control.

The interconnectedness of seeking political and economic sovereignty was most evident in the aforementioned 1956 Suez crisis. Politically, nationalizing the Suez Canal was an assertion of Egypt's full sovereignty over a national waterway vital to international trade and controlled by Europe's leading imperialist power, Britain. Thanks to the geopolitical significance of the canal, Nasser's defiant stance was a watershed in the global and Arab struggle for economic liberation. The failure of the tripartite aggression to reverse the decision of nationalization irrevocably undermined Britain's hold in the region. Trust in Sterling was shaken after London's imposition of capital control on its Egyptian use backfired.⁷⁷ The Suez battle also gave calls for pan-Arab unity much-needed impetus.

Economically, nationalization was Nasser's defiant response to Washington's withdrawal of its pledge to fund the construction of Egypt's flagship developmental project, the Aswan High Dam. Following nationalization, Egypt's successful and orderly takeover of the canal's operations illustrated the ability of colonized peoples to run their own economic affairs within Egypt and beyond. The same year the Suez Canal was nationalized, French oil prospectors hit upon giant reserves in the Algerian Sahara.⁷⁸ The conflict over oil, which was long-standing in the Mashriq, flared up in the Maghreb. Iraq and Algeria were its respective epicentres. Both countries considered energy resources the material base for economic liberation, and following the sector's nationalization in 1971,

⁷⁷ See S. G. Galpern, *Money, Oil and Empire in the Middle East: Sterling and Postwar Imperialism, 1944–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 161.

⁷⁸ See M. Musso, "'Oil Will Set Us Free': The Hydrocarbon Industry and the Algerian Decolonization Process', in A. W. M. Smith and C. Jeppesen (eds.), *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?* (London: UCL Press, 2017), pp. 62–84 at p. 62.

earmarked its revenues for economic development and social welfare, including the wide-scale provision of health and education. The road to nationalization, however, was specific to the political economy of colonial oil exploitation in each country.

In Iraq, Abdel Karim Qasim's revolutionary government had to confront the powerful Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a consortium of American and European corporations that monopolized oil resources. Iraq's previous monarchist administrations had struck a conciliatory tone with the IPC. Careful not to upset imperialist powers like Britain, they bargained for a greater profit share, but failed to undermine the IPC's chokehold concession over Iraq's entire territory. By contrast, Qasim unilaterally withdrew the company's concession over unexploited fields in 1961, which amounted to 99 per cent of the concessionary area, and set up a parallel public company (INOC) to develop the oil industry along national lines.⁷⁹ Once Soviet technical support and guarantees for full purchase of output were secured, the IPC was fully nationalized in 1972, and 50 per cent of the government's oil revenues were earmarked – by law – for development programmes.⁸⁰

In Algeria, the struggle over hydrocarbons also had a distinct anti-colonial tone. The French authorities saw in the new-found oil fields an opportunity to wean their economy off Gulf oil. They hoped to establish a Euro-African sphere of energy security that would act as a third power bloc next to the United States and the Soviet Union. Some officials wishfully described the Sahara as 'European Siberia', 'the land of tomorrow', and its development their generation's calling. Paris detached the desert region, which was also the site of atomic tests, from Algeria's three colonial departments and tied its administration directly to the metropole.⁸¹

Algeria's liberation movement, on the other hand, saw oil as a weapon against economic neo-colonialism. In negotiations with France, its leadership insisted on full sovereignty over the Sahara. The 1962 Evian accords granted Algeria as much, but France retained its economic privileges for excavation, extraction, and production. Supervision was placed under joint Franco-Algerian administration. The compromise was short-lived. In 1963, Algeria's new leadership established the country's national oil and gas company

79 See Alnasrawi, *The Economy of Iraq*, p. 12.

80 For details on nationalization and role of oil revenues in funding development, see M. E. Brown, 'The Nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, 1 (1979), pp. 107–24.

81 These officials include French diplomat Erik Labonne, and financial commissioner Pierre Cornet. See Musso, "'Oil will Set Us Free'", pp. 70–1.

(Sonatrach), which was granted new concessions for pipelines. In 1967, Ben Bella's successor, Boumédiène, nationalized US and British infrastructure in retaliation for their pro-Israel stance during the Six-Day War. Two years later, Algeria joined OPEC. In two more years, Boumédiène would also draw on Soviet technical and marketing support to nationalize the entire sector, including foreign assets in the Sahara, after France rejected Algerian demands for raising the selling price.⁸²

Recovering hydrocarbon wealth did not take place in isolation from trans-national politics. It was very much a Third Worldist and pan-Arab affair. Arab nationalist governments, led by Egypt, decried the wasteful manner in which Gulf conservative monarchical regimes spent oil revenues and demanded their investment in developing Arab markets and industry. The FLN described the battle for control over oil as 'part of the struggle of the people of the Third World for their economic liberation and the establishment of a new international economic order'.⁸³ On a regional level, the FLN also considered oil development a unifying element of the Arab Maghreb, only to be disappointed after Tunisia cooperated with French companies. The notion of 'Arab oil for the Arabs' was a common refrain across the region, not just countries with socialist leanings.

One of its renowned proponents was Abdullah Tariki. In his capacity as Saudi Arabia's oil minister, Tariki led efforts with his Venezuelan counterpart, Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso, to co-found OPEC in 1960, before falling out with the Saudi regime due to his pro-Nasserist sympathies. Tariki produced detailed studies exposing the prohibitive profits of foreign oil companies and devised formulas for profit-sharing to recuperate lost proceeds. Dubbed the red sheikh by Western media, he foresaw the need to secure oil markets with Soviet assistance as a precondition for nationalization, which in turn, was an important step towards Arab unity.⁸⁴

Industrialization and Financial Sovereignty

Industrialization was the most challenging and least successful component of economic independence. It required reversing many decades of colonial

82 On the Evian accords' oil arrangements and the subsequent path to nationalization, see Musso, "Oil Will Set Us Free", pp. 79–83.

83 Resolution of 31 December 1980 passed by the Central Committee of the FLN; see Nellis, 'Algerian socialism and its critics', p. 9.

84 On Tariki's detailed account of the possibilities of nationalizing Arab oil, see A. Tariki, 'Hal Yumkin Ta'mim al-Betrol al-Arabi', in Tariki, *al-'Amal al-Kamilah*. It was originally published in *Majallat al-Betrol wa al-Ghaz al-Arabi* [Oil and Gas Magazine] 2, 6 (March 1967).

policies that favoured foreign capital and agri-exports over domestic manufacture. Disruption of global trade networks during the Second World War did boost local production, but in a manner that primarily served the European war effort rather than the needs of Arab populations. At the end of the war, protectionist measures were scaled back. Meanwhile, global patterns of trade were partly restored to reinforce relations of dependency. Attempts by Arab and other Third World countries to sever this dependency are often reduced to a single logic of production: import substitution industrialization (ISI).⁸⁵ The policy of replacing imported goods with domestic production, whose limitations are well documented, was a prevalent philosophy of growth among newly independent nations. In socialist-leaning countries, however, it was part of a far-reaching transformation of relations of production. It impacted the redistribution of asset capital on a global, national, and even corporate scale as well as the re-organization of production at the state and market levels. This in turn led to a profound change in the levels of output, patterns of employment, distribution of income, and habits of consumption.

In Egypt, the socialization of industrial production took place after 1952 in three successive but overlapping stages. In the first phase, which lasted until the Suez crisis, administrative reforms created public organs to oversee the planning of developmental projects in infrastructure, like the Aswan High Dam, and heavy industry like the steel and iron complex at Helwan and the fertilizer plant in Aswan.⁸⁶ Private, including foreign capital, however, remained the dominant initiator of industrial activity. The nationalization of the Suez Canal marked the second phase, which largely saw the Egyptianization of foreign, namely, British and French, capital.⁸⁷ The last and most comprehensive phase began in 1958 but accelerated in 1961 and 1963. This phase impacted corporate ownership and management, commercial relations, and workers' rights. In the sphere of ownership, Egyptian private capital was nationalized on a massive scale. Three ownership structures emerged. The first was full state ownership of finance capital institutions such as banks and insurance companies as well as big industry. The second was half ownership in the field of light processing and public works, and the third consisted of public-private partnerships or full private ownership in small-scale manufacture.⁸⁸

85 On classical interpretations of import substitution and state-led industrialization, see Cammett, *Political Economy of the Middle East*, pp. 46–9.

86 The names of agencies were constantly changed; see Mabro, *Egyptian Economy*, p. 112; Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, pp. 109–11.

87 Belgian capital was also nationalized as a response to the assassination of Congolese prime minister and anti-colonial leader Patrice Lumumba; see *ibid.*, p. 127.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Commercially, market mechanisms were also subordinated to state control. A state monopsony was created in the cotton industry, and the public sector's share in cotton export firms rose to 50 per cent.⁸⁹ Other price controls were put in place, the stock exchanges of Cairo and Alexandria suspended, and tariffs on imports sustained to ward off foreign competition. Managerial relations and profit-sharing were also transformed at the corporate, industry, and national levels. At the corporate level, limited or joint-stock companies were required to allocate 5 per cent of their profits to the purchase of government bonds and 25 per cent to employees and workers, including 5 per cent for housing and 10 per cent for social security. Boards of directors were limited to seven members, including two representatives of employees and workers, respectively. Compensation for executives was capped at £5,000 and stock shares at £10,000. At the sectoral and national levels, state industrial activity was run by a pyramidal structure of ministries and public agencies. Plans were set within a three- or five-year frame.⁹⁰ The ambitious plan of 1960 aimed at doubling national income in the span of ten years.⁹¹ It generated 1 million jobs and achieved an average growth rate of 6 per cent.⁹²

The third wave of nationalization dealt a heavy blow to the upper bourgeoisie, including Egypt's two most powerful monopolies, the Mitr and Abboud groups.⁹³ A similar pattern unfolded in Syria after 1963, whereby the nationalization of banks and large enterprises resumed on a much wider scale.⁹⁴ Iraq followed a similar path. After 1963, a succession of Ba'athist and Nasserist figures gained the upper hand in government, continuing economic policies that started under Qasim. All of Iraq's banks and thirty-two large industrial and commercial enterprises were nationalized. The country's industrial organization became increasingly aligned with Egypt's model. Top-down public agencies, including state-managed banks, ran the production of textiles, metals, and chemicals. Companies were required to share 25 per cent of their profits with their labourers and employees, as well as grant representation on the board of directors.⁹⁵ The state's share in the output of big manufacturing concerns and in employment jumped to 62 per cent and

89 Mabro, *Egyptian Economy*, p. 129. 90 Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, pp. 152–3.

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 153. 92 Cammett, *Political Economy of the Middle East*, p. 242.

93 On the oligopolistic powers of these two groups, see Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, pp. 111–15.

94 For a list of companies nationalized in the third wave of 1963, see S. Moubayid, *Abdel Nasser wa al-Ta'mim. Waq'i al-Inqilab fi Suriya* (Beirut: Riyad el-Rayyes Books, 2019), p. 88. On the popular protest against reversing nationalization measures, see *ibid.*, p. 76.

95 Batatu, *Old Social Classes*, p. 1031.

46 per cent, respectively.⁹⁶ Thanks to foreign exchange generated by oil revenues, Iraq and Algeria did not face severe financing shortages. In Algeria, oil and gas served as the feedstock for a modern petrochemicals industry. Energy export earnings bankrolled the import of plant and capital goods necessary for heavy industry like steel manufacturing and vehicle assembly. Collaboration with foreign capital focused on turnkey projects and technical assistance, with no foreign direct investment.

Opposition to foreign direct investment and the encouragement of national development was part of a long struggle for economic nationalism dating back to the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ What distinguished this process under Arab socialism was the role of government in the management of capital investment, that is, credit and production. Autonomous state decision-making in the sphere of the economy, or economic sovereignty, was a key prerequisite for national liberation. Anti-colonial governments were keen to acquire such autonomy. Financial autonomy, namely, control over capital flows and regulation of credit and monetary relations, was rightly considered the most sensitive and significant lever of economic sovereignty. Both financial mechanisms were handled by central banks, which became a major site of struggle over the future of national economic development.⁹⁸ Under colonial rule, private and foreign-owned banks, or European-based currency boards, took on the role of central banking. After independence, most Arab countries nationalized these banks or set up new ones. These banks shared basic objectives like currency issue and stabilization. But their mandate and impact on economic development varied across the region. Countries with a market-oriented economy, like Lebanon, Kuwait, and Jordan, restricted the ability of central banks to expand credit in the service of development. Countries with socialist policies or state-led planning, like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, did the opposite. Their nationalized or newly established central banks acted not only as a primary regulator of credit but, in the words of Iraq's then central bank governor Abdel Hasan Zalzal, also as a planner of economic activity as a whole. In Iraq, the bank's policy was additionally envisioned to expand the productive base of the economy to reduce its dependency on oil.⁹⁹

96 Cammett, *Political Economy of the Middle East*, p. 245.

97 On economic nationalism in Egypt, see A. Azziz Ezzelarab, *European Control and Egypt's Traditional Elites: A Case Study in Elite Economic Nationalism* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

98 On the distinction between economic nationalism and economic sovereignty, see H. Safieddine, *Banking on the State: The Financial Foundations of Lebanon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 12–13.

99 Ibid., pp. 110–11.

Arab Socialism and Culture

Besides its economic role, Arab socialism was a force of cultural ferment and transformation. New and radical schools of artistic expression flourished in the realm of literature, cinema, theatre, and music. In Egypt, movie-making before the 1952 revolution was largely profit-oriented. Commercial productions often focused on sentimental melodramas. In the 1950s, a new trend of realist cinema with a high level of social and political consciousness emerged. Its leading advocates, like film-makers Salah Abu-Seif and Yousif Chahine, dealt with themes of capitalist exploitation, social injustice, and sexual repression. They employed avant-garde filming and editing techniques that rendered the movies of high artistic, rather than mere propagandist, value and garnered international recognition. Their cinematic philosophy was eventually articulated and published in 1966 in Egypt's leftist monthly, *Al-Tali'a* (*The Vanguard*). The state and public sector actively supported this new cinema. Government agencies like the Egyptian General Organization of Cinema offered training for new scriptwriters and financed iconic productions like Chahine's *The Land* and Tawfiq Saleh's *The Rebels*. West European- and Soviet-trained instructors like renowned actor Mahmoud Moursi returned to Egypt and taught at the Higher Institute of Cinema. Graduates of state-sponsored art schools like Sana' Jamil and Samiha Ayoub turned into highly revered and fiercely independent actresses who left their indelible mark on cinema and theatre, with Ayoub becoming director of the National Theatre in the late 1970s. The ministry of culture also published a monthly journal and cine-clubs were founded in Cairo and Alexandria, offering urban audiences the opportunity to view movie productions from around the world.¹⁰⁰

Poetry and literary criticism were also subject to experimentation in form and subject matter. Egyptian poets like Abd al-Rahman Abnudi, Ahmad Fouad Negm, and Salah Jahin, who was also a playwright and cartoonist, popularized colloquial Arabic poetry that until then was regarded as inferior to traditional verse within urban bourgeois circles. These poets imbued their

100 On Ayoub's role and fame, see 'New Book Celebrates Egypt's Famed Actress Samiha Ayoub', available at <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/35/190291/Arts-Culture/Stage-Street/New-book-celebrates-Egypt%E2%80%99s-famed-actress-Samiha-A.aspx>, last accessed 2 April 2021. On the iconic Sanaa Gamil, see M. Marie, '5th SIFTY bears name of legendary Sanaa Gamil', *Egypt Today*, 18 February 2020, available at <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/81779/5th-SIFTY-bears-name-of-legendary-Sanaa-Gamil>, last accessed 2 April 2021. For all other references, see Q. Samak, *MERIP* No. 56 (April 1977), pp. 12–15. See also B. Wharton, 'Cultivating cultural change through cinema; Youssef Chahine and the creation of national identity in Nasser's Egypt', *Africana* 3, 1 (2009), pp. 31–55.

works with social commentary and national fervour, and many of them were lyricized and performed by politically committed musicians like Sheikh Imam or rising radio and television stars like Um Kalthoum and Abdel Halim Hafiz.¹⁰¹ Um Kalthoum and Hafiz were regularly featured on Cairo's pan-Arab radio station, Voice of the Arabs, which was also a major vehicle of pan-Arab mobilization across the Arab region.¹⁰²

Across Sinai in Bilad al-Sham, poetic and literary forms of expression were also the centre of debate between two of Beirut's leading literary magazines, *Shi'r* and *al-Adab*. *Shi'r*'s celebration of prose poetry was associated with a liberal trend of seeking art for art's sake. By contrast, *al-Adab*'s founder and Arab nationalist Suhail Idriss emphasized the independent yet social and political dimension of literature. *Al-Adab*'s position was informed by the existential concept of *iltizam* (commitment), best articulated by literary critic Raif Khoury, co-founder of the communist movement's journal of record *al-Tariq*, and practised by avant-garde novelists like Egypt's Sonallah Ibrahim, who reportedly wrote letters of support to Nasser while imprisoned for his communist sympathies.¹⁰³ The 1967 military defeat led to a further radicalization of the literary scene in Beirut in the face of revisionist cultural trends that sought to undermine Arab civilization and the entire socialist experiment as causes of defeat.¹⁰⁴ A leading voice was Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani, whose stories embodied a new wave of realism that centred on the experience of revolutionary struggle as part of a universalist pursuit of justice with all its contradictions, defeats, and triumphs. Significantly, Kanafani played an important political role; until his assassination by Mossad, he

101 On colloquial poetry, see W. Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 37–63; N. Radwan, 'Palestine in Egyptian colloquial poetry', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, 4 (2011), pp. 61–77. On Um Kalthoum, see V. Sahhab and E. Sahhab, *Mawsou'at Umm Kalthoum*, vol. 111 (Hazmiyeh: Mousiqat al-Sharq, 2003). On Sheikh Imam, see Sh. al-Nabulsi, *al-Aghani fi al-Maghani: al-Sheikh Imam Issa, Sira Faniyya wa Musiqiyya*, 2 vols. (Beirut: al-Mouassassa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1998).

102 On the foundation of Voice of the Arabs, see F. al-Deeb, *Abdel Nasser wa Tahrir al-Mashriq al-'Arabi. Shahadat Fathi al-Deeb* (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Istratiyya wal-Siyasiyya bil Ahram, 2000).

103 On the rivalry between *Shi'r* and *al-Adab* and the discourse of 'iltizam', see the *al-Adab* special issue on its founder Suhail Idriss, vol. 56 (2008), available at https://www.al-adab.com/sites/default/files/aladab_2008_v56_01-03_0006_0065.pdf, last accessed 2 April 2021; A. Spanos, 'Mediating "iltizam": the discourse on translation in the early Yyars of 'al-Adab'', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 37 (2017), pp. 110–39. On Raif Khoury's committed literature, see R. Khoury, *al-Adab al-Mas'ul* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1989). On Sonallah Ibrahim, see S. Salem, *Anti-Colonial Afterlives in Egypt: The Politics of Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 120. More generally on Arab intellectuals under Nasser, see S. Idriss, *al-Muthaqqaf al-'Arabi wa al-Sulta. Bahth fi Riwayat al-Tajrubah al-Nasiriyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 2003).

104 On Beirut's cultural scene, see Z. Maasri, *Cosmopolitan Radicalism: The Visual Politics of Beirut's Global Sixties* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

was the spokesperson for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Other socialist authors also held significant leadership positions, including the novelist and poet May Sayigh, who was the secretary general of the General Union of Palestinian Women.¹⁰⁵

Further east, Baghdad's intelligentsia of the 1950s and 1960s came from under the 'overcoat' of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). These intellectuals included poets like Abdel Wahhab al-Bayati and Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, archaeologist Tahir Baqir, fiction writers Dhunun Ayyub and Fuad al-Takarli, literary critics Ali Jawad al-Tahir and Nazik al-Aaraji, and economists like Muhammad Salman Hassan. They contributed to the formation of a secular, cosmopolitan, and largely leftist cultural current, serving as a catalyst for revolution. In the wake of the 1958 revolution, prominent women and men of this movement became part of the ideological and administrative apparatus of the state. They also dominated civil society associations like the writers' and teachers' unions. Marxist publications like cultural journals *al-Muthaqqaf* (*The Intellectual*) and *al-Adib al-Iraqi* (*The Iraqi Writer*), as well as the ICP's newspaper, *Ittihad al-Sha'b*, garnered wide readership. Qasim sought to curb the ascending influence of an independent cultural left towards the end of his time in office, when polarization between communists and pan-Arabists reached its zenith. The ascension of the Ba'ath Party to power in the wake of 1963 coup led to a large-scale crackdown and purge of communists. Major cultural figures like poets Mudhaffar al-Nawwab, Buland al-Haydari, and the 'people's poet' Muhammad Salih Bahr al-Ulum, as well as fiction writers like Safira Hafez, were exiled, detained, or put in prison. Others like journalist Abu-Said were tortured to death. The cultural influence of socialist thought in both Iraq and Syria remained present throughout the 1960s, but, due to persecution, it never fully recovered, and turned exilic in later decades.¹⁰⁶

Arab Socialism and Gender

Arab socialism was equally transformative in the realm of gender relations. The left, broadly defined, played an important role in the history of the Arab

¹⁰⁵ For details on the culture of the Palestinian liberation movement, see K. Nabulsi and A. R. Takriti, *The Palestinian Revolution* (Oxford: University of Oxford Department of Politics and International Relations, 2016), available at learnpalestine.politics.ox.ac.uk, last accessed 6 April 2021.

¹⁰⁶ On Iraq's leftist culture, see Y. Salaam, 'On the Decline of the Leftist Intelligentsia in Iraq', *Europe Solidaire San Frontières*, 29 August 2007. For the afterlives of the exile suffered by much of Iraq's leftist milieu, see Z. Saleh, *Return to Ruin: Iraqi Narratives of Exile and Nostalgia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

women's movement. Marxist and socialist feminisms and the spaces created by them contributed substantially to women's participation in political, economic, and social struggles, especially after the 1940s. Influential literature focuses on socialist failures rather than contributions. Failures were real. For much of the twentieth century, Arab communist and socialist parties were male-dominated, especially within the upper echelons of leadership, and there were many instances in which they prioritized various political, economic, and social agendas over women's liberation.¹⁰⁷ The same could be generally said for Arab socialist states, and, indeed, for many socialist states across the world.

A considerable amount of research on Arab feminism has painted a more complex picture, one in which numerous socialist struggles and policies were advantageous for the cause of gender equality.¹⁰⁸ Despite considerable patriarchal residues within them and immense social obstacles surrounding them, communist parties, and later Arab socialist ones, opened their membership to women well before other major political formations in the region. In the case of the Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian communist parties, for example, this took place as early as the mid-1930s.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, women's membership tended to be extremely low in the 1930s and 1940s, often relying on recruitment amongst the relatives of male communists and socialists.¹¹⁰

The situation improved substantially after the 1950s as leftist parties began to include a large number of women graduating from teachers' colleges and universities. Moreover, party women as well as fellow travellers were able to set up associations that were unprecedentedly radical in their feminist as well as socialist and anti-colonial demands, conceptualizing the struggles against class exploitation, colonialism, and patriarchy as indivisibly interlinked. In Egypt, the communist-affiliated League of Women Students and Graduates from the University and Egyptian Institutes (est. 1944/5) committed itself to

107 M. Abi Sa'ab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 74.

108 The complex reception of the socialist era by the contemporary Egyptian women's movement is explored in N. Al-Ali, *Secularism, Gender, and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women's Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 86–127.

109 The role of women in the Syrian–Lebanese Communist Party and the broader socialist circles surrounding it during the interwar period is discussed in S. Tannoury-Karam, 'The Making of a Leftist Milieu: Anti-Colonialism, Anti-Fascism, and the Political Engagement of Intellectuals in Mandate Lebanon, 1920–1948', PhD dissertation, Northeastern University, 2017, pp. 176–233.

110 For the involvement of women in the Palestinian communist National Liberation League, and its limitations, in the 1940s, see F. Abdelhadi (ed.), *Adwar al-Mar'a al-Filastiniyya fi al-Arba'eeniyat. Al-Musahama al-Siyassiyya li al-Mar'a al-Filastiniyya* (al-Bireh [Palestine]: Markaz al-Mar'a al-Filastiniyya li al-Abhath wa al-Tawtheeq, 2006), p. 42.

‘struggle for the widest freedoms, struggle for liberation from oppression, hunger and aggression; struggle by ourselves and for ourselves; struggle to create a free noble life for Egyptian women under the sovereignty of a free and noble country’.¹¹¹ A much larger formation in Iraq, the Iraqi Women’s League, was founded by communist women in the 1940s, and could count membership in the thousands by the 1950s.¹¹²

Additionally, the political programmes of communist and Arab socialist parties featured a much stronger commitment to women’s rights than did those of their liberal and conservative counterparts. This was especially witnessed in the post-independence period. Arab communist and socialist parties included explicit, albeit sometimes patronizing, commitments to women’s rights in their political programmes. The Ba’ath Party constitution of 1947, for instance, insisted that ‘the Arab woman shall enjoy all the rights of the citizen. The party shall struggle to raise her level so that she is worthy of these rights.’ A more progressive stance can be found in Communist Party programmes. The Jordanian Communist Party, to give one example, advocated in its first political programme of 1951 the ‘struggle to liberate Jordanian women from reactionary chains, and to equate them with men in all political, economic, and social matters’.¹¹³ From the 1950s to the 1970s, these commitments were reflected in the level of political symbolism. Across the Arab world, few men could claim to match the iconic status of the FLN’s Jemilah Buherid or the PFLP’s Laila Khaled.

On a different level, Arab communist and socialist parties were active in the battle for women’s suffrage across the region. In Lebanon, the communists played an important role in achieving the franchise for women in 1951, largely as a result of the struggles of feminists like Emily Faris Ibrahim, who had fought for that right in the communist press throughout the 1940s, and was the first Arab woman to stand for parliamentary elections in 1953.¹¹⁴ In pre-socialist Syria, the parties of the left played an important role in expanding the limited franchise to include women in 1949, and in achieving equal franchise and the right to stand for election in 1953.

111 S. Botman, ‘The experience of women in the Egyptian communist movement, 1939–1945’, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 11, 2 (1988), pp. 117–26 at p. 123.

112 The organization was initially founded in the mid-1940s as the League for the Defence of Women’s Rights. It changed its name to the Iraqi Women’s League in 1958. Its non-communist counterpart was the Iraqi Women’s Union, which was founded in 1945. For more details, see Z. Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq: Between Nation-Building and Fragmentation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

113 J. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 95.

114 Tannoury-Karam, ‘The Making of a Leftist Milieu’, p. 176.

As for the socialist states, their many achievements and failures are reflected in the complexities of the Nasser era in Egypt. Mervat Hatem's analysis of 'state-feminism' in this period still rings true. Under Nasser, Egypt witnessed the erasure of legal gender discrimination in the fields of education and employment, and the state's recruitment of women into schools, universities, and bureaucratic positions. This resulted in an unprecedented growth of women's social mobility and a substantial increase in their economic empowerment. Yet there was a failure in changing personal status laws that discriminated against women.¹¹⁵ Nasser's government attempted to amend these laws on multiple occasions, particularly after the appointment of a feminist, Hikmat Abu Zayd, as minister of social affairs. However, the amendments proposed by her and other women were withdrawn under the combined pressure of conservative religious opposition and major political events, particularly the break-up of the United Arab Republic in 1961 and the defeat in the 1967 War.¹¹⁶

In Iraq, there was an earlier, and more resolute, will to change personal status laws, especially under the influence of the Iraqi Communist Party. After the 1958 revolution, the only communist member to be represented in Qasim's cabinet was Naziha al-Dulaimi, who became the first woman cabinet minister of an Arab state. Working with the Iraqi Women's League, she successfully managed to enact the most progressive personal status law in the entire region, introducing gender equality in sensitive matters like inheritance. This law, however, was reversed after the coup against Qasim, with Ba'athist figures playing the major role in this reversal, illustrating the failure to couple gender equality in the political and labour spheres with personal status reforms. The only socialist Arab country to create long-lasting change in this field was South Yemen, but even that change was reversed after the North Yemeni victory in the 1994 war that resulted in the unification of North and South Yemen.¹¹⁷

Such experiences led socialist feminists like the late Nawal El Saadawi to note that 'the path to socialism is also the path to the joint liberation of women and men. In his denial of the freedom of the woman, man denies his own freedom, and the same applies to the feudalist or capitalist who denies the freedom of the worker.' Nevertheless, 'many socialist rulers misunderstood this fundamental fact, detaching the cause of women's freedom from the cause of the liberation of peasants and workers, imagining that the eradication of

115 M. Hatem, 'The enduring alliance of nationalism and patriarchy in Muslim personal status laws: the case of modern Egypt', *Feminist Issues* 6, 1 (1986), pp. 19–41.

116 F. Najjar, 'Egypt's laws of personal status', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 10, 3 (1988), pp. 322–3.

117 For a detailed examination of the South Yemeni case, see S. Dahlgren, *Contesting Realities: The Public Space and Morality in South Yemen* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

ownership and nationalization decrees will automatically lead to human liberation or the liberation of women. This is the error that was committed by most Arab rulers who raised the slogans of socialism and nationalization.¹¹⁸

Socialism and Islamic Political Currents

The struggles over personal status laws illustrated the enduring strength of conservative religious currents even under socialism. Yet in a clear sign of the intellectual and social hegemony of Arab socialism at the time, prominent Islamist thinkers like Sayyid Qutb in Egypt, Mustafa al-Sibai in Syria, and Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr in Iraq debated socialism at length. They did so while actively seeking to consolidate religious political movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Da'wah Party, both of which competed with communism and socialism for mass followings. These thinkers ascribed certain socialist values to Islam based on the principle of 'social solidarity' (*al-Takaful al-Ijtimai*'), critiqued the excesses of capitalism like usury and extreme wealth, and opposed European colonialism. While Qutb couched Islamic socialism in capitalist terminology like equality of opportunity,¹¹⁹ al-Sibai explicitly supported socialist measures in Syria like nationalization and land redistribution on the premise of 'social necessity', but without forgoing the basic principle of the right to private property.¹²⁰ Baqr al-Sadr offered the most detailed and theoretically inclined critique of dialectical materialism as the flawed basis of socialism. Having reduced Marxism to materialism and its economist interpretations, Sadr sought to construct an alternative system to both capitalism and socialism that combined private rights with social justice.¹²¹ As the 1970s and 1980s progressed, witnessing the growth of the regional role of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies, as well as changes taking place within the Islamic Republic of Iran under the influence of more economically conservative figures like Rafsanjani, these socialist influences

118 N. El Saadawi, *al-Wajh al-'Aari li al-Mara'a al-Arabiya* (Windsor: Hindawi Books, 2017 [1977]), p. 139.

119 Qutb argued that absolute justice decreed a disparity of income, since people by nature were unequal in abilities, and a harmonious balance required that they achieve the full potential of their talents, see W. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 36–7.

120 Al-Sibai was professor of Islamic Jurisprudence and Personal Status Law at Damascus University. On his support of socialist reforms, see M. al-Siba'i, *Ishtirakiyyat al-Islam* (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiyyah li al-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, 1960), pp. 101, 108.

121 Sadr posited three principles as the basis of Islamic economics: three-tiered ownership structure of property (public, private, and state); economic freedom on a limited scale; and social justice, see M. Baqir al-Sadr, *Iqtisaduna* (Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf lil Matbu'at wa al-Nashr, 1987).

on Islamic thought waned, and neoliberal religious interpretations grew. This corresponded to a general retreat from socialism.

Conclusion: Socialist Declines and Renewals

The decline of Arab socialism is frequently attributed to the momentous military debacle of 1967. A straight line is drawn from Nasser's defeat to Sadat's open market *infitah* policy.¹²² This teleological analysis does not accord with the historical record. The post-1967 years saw a sharp turn to the left on the part of several major revolutionary movements in the region.¹²³ A case in point is the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN). Offshoots of MAN that emerged after 1967 – including the leadership that won the independence struggle in South Yemen, the PFLP in Palestine, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf that led the Dhufar revolution – blamed the defeat not on state socialism per se, but on the petit bourgeois composition of the revolutionary governments that led the socialist experiment. These governments were condemned for not being radical enough.¹²⁴ Prominent Marxist ideologues like Hussein Mroue were also quick to point out that the defeat was not cultural or civilizational but military, and a direct consequence of concerted imperialist efforts to destroy national liberation movements.¹²⁵ At the state level, there was continuation or acceleration of socialist policies in Iraq, Algeria, and South Yemen, with the latter adopting a Marxist–Leninist approach after 1969. Qaddafi's 1969 coup in Libya was also modelled after Egypt's Free Officers, although Libyan policies later took a markedly mercurial character drawing on the eclectic and often incoherent abstractions of Qaddafi's Green Book and his 'Third International Theory'.

The existence of these post-1967 socialist-inspired experiments does not alter the fact that the Six-Day War definitely produced a political setback as

122 For instance, the late historian Roger Owen argued that the defeat signalled the 'bankruptcy of the secular, Arab socialist, post-independence, self-styled revolutionary regimes themselves': R. Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 19.

123 For a recent edited collection that explores various aspects of this process, see L. Guirguis (ed.), *The Arab Lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s–1970s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

124 A. R. Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 84–131; W. Kazzuha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and His Comrades from Nationalism to Communism* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1975), pp. 65–101.

125 H. Mroueh, 'Tariquna ila Taghyeer al-Insan al-'Arabi', *al-Adab* 7/8 (1985), pp. 34–7.

well as an economic crisis, especially in Egypt. The second half of the decade witnessed a sharp decline in industrial growth rates, which cannot be detached from the heavy military spending that took place as a result of the 1967 War, the subsequent war of attrition, and the loss of revenue due to the ensuing closure of the Suez Canal (1967–1973).¹²⁶ These dire developments forced Nasser to seek a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf regimes. Geopolitical reconciliation with conservative forces, however, did not translate into a speedy dismantlement of the socialist apparatus. That took place several years later in the wake of Nasser's death, not defeat, and the subsequent change of leadership. Under Sadat, Egypt's drift to the American camp in the aftermath of the 1973 War bought new geopolitical and geo-economic configurations into play.

The 1973 War granted conservative Gulf regimes unprecedented economic power. The Arab oil embargo in retaliation for Western support of Israel contributed to a meteoric rise in energy prices. In the Gulf Arab states, there was a massive excess of surplus capital that was too large for local economies to absorb. This augmented the phenomenon of Gulf capital. While most of this capital was invested in Western economies, there was also substantial export to neighbouring Arab states.¹²⁷ Much of this wealth was used to contain revolutionary currents within the Gulf and elsewhere.¹²⁸ This was the material basis upon which regional conservative currents, including religious ones, drew to achieve ideological dominance in the 1980s at the expense of the Arab left. The 1982 expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon by invading Israeli forces dealt another major blow to radical revolutionary struggles long inspired by the Palestinian national liberation movement.

The post-1973 oil revenues also benefited socialist oil-rich states like Algeria and Iraq. Much of this income was channelled internally into development projects and welfare provision. The Ba'ath government in Baghdad, however, also spent heavily on the military, initiating a destructive war with post-revolutionary Iran. For its part, Iran confronted Arab socialism with serious ideological and material challenges. As the first country in modern history to

126 S. Soliman, *State and Industrial Capitalism in Egypt* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2005), p. 11.

127 For an extensive study of this process and its ramifications, see A. Hanieh, *Money, Markets, and Monarchies: The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). See also O. Alshehaby, *Tasdeer al-Tharwa wa Ightirab al-Insan. Tarikh al-Khalala al-Intaji fi Duwal al-Khaleej al-'Arabiyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wih'dah al-Arabiyya, 2018).

128 Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution*, pp. 261–309; R. Baheer, 'A counterrevolutionary state: popular movements and the making of Saudi Arabia', *Past and Present* 238 (2018), pp. 233–77.

declare a revolutionary Islamic orientation, it actively solicited transnational connections around its clerical leadership and explicitly opposed US imperialism in the region. This inspired all sorts of political activists, including religious figures like former Muslim Brother Fathi al-Shiqaqi (founder of Islamic Jihad), as well as Marxist thinkers like the Palestinian Fateh revolutionary Munir Shafiq, who even converted, in the wake of the Iranian revolution, from Christianity to Shi'a Islam.

More significantly for the internal mobilizational politics of the left, the impact of the Iranian revolution was heavily felt among the Shi'a populations of Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. In all of these countries, communist and Arab socialist parties drew heavily on marginalized, often rural or recently urbanized, constituencies that had a substantial Shi'a composition. Khomeini's Islamic challenge, generously funded and ideologically nurtured by a major oil-producing state, not only affected the left's recruitment prospects but also drained its existing reservoir of cadres. Iran's clerical leadership was felt well beyond Shi'a political networks, vindicating Islamic currents of all shades, including those deriving from the Muslim Brotherhood. Secular anti-colonial contexts were not immune to these changes. In Palestine, after the establishment of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in 1987, socialist movements like the PFLP lost substantial ground to it in key areas like Gaza.

Here and elsewhere, Islamic currents were the traditional competitors of the broader Arab socialist camp. They had long been sponsored by Saudi Arabia, especially after the clash, in the wake of the 1962 Yemeni revolution, between President Nasser and King Faisal Al Saud.¹²⁹ On the international stage, the latter established the Organization of the Islamic Conference to counter the Arab League. Domestically, throughout the 1960s, King Faisal reversed an earlier decade of nascent social liberalization, carrying the banner of religion as the ideological alternative to pan-Arabism and Arab socialism. In the 1980s, the Saudi-sponsored varieties of Islam had to take mobilizational forms that could counter the Khomeini-inspired variants from Tehran, as well as fulfil renewed Cold War anti-communist functions, particularly in Afghanistan, the last country in which the Brezhnev Doctrine was implemented. In the face of the 1979 Soviet intervention in support of the Afghani communist state, the US

129 For the Saudi welcoming of Muslim Brotherhood exiles from Egypt and their role in its religious 'Sahwa' (revival), see S. Lacroix, *Awakening Dissent: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Saudi Arabia*, trans. George Holoch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

anti-communist crusade depended on mobilizing globally for an Islamic holy war. Through US-allied regimes like those of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, Salafi Jihadi currents were recruited, funded, trained, and armed across the Arab region and beyond. Besides their puritanical outlook, iconoclastic orientation, literalist interpretations, and obsession with doctrinal fidelity, these currents – the forerunners of al-Qaida and ISIS – were fiercely opposed to socialism as well as to pan-Arabism in all their varieties.

For all their secular outlook and general opposition to religious currents, Arab states that retained vestiges of socialism, or at least verbal allegiance to it, like Algeria, Syria, and Iraq, were not immune to instrumentalizing these currents in order to maintain popular consent for undemocratic rule or to attain geopolitical aims. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Iraqi Ba'ath government, despite suppressing all religious parties within its domains, was a major backer of the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency against the Syrian Ba'ath government. Following the Gulf War and the US siege of the 1990s, it relied heavily on internal religious legitimation mechanisms, going as far as adding the Islamic emblem 'God is Greater' to Iraq's flag. As for the Syrian Ba'ath government, it sided with the Islamic Republic of Iran in its war with Iraq; aided at various junctures Islamic resistance groups like Hizbullah and Hamas that were locked in battle with the Israeli occupation forces in south Lebanon and Palestine; and sponsored Salafi Jihadi currents after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

This brings us to a key feature of the Arab socialist odyssey, one that was experienced elsewhere on the globe, namely, the intensification of statist political culture, driven by the logics of regime survival and state securitization in the face of ongoing neo-colonial threats as well as internal erosion of political legitimacy. In this context, socialist visions built on universal principles of equal citizenship were often undermined by immediate regime needs that required tapping into pre-existing structures of social segmentation. In some cases, like South Yemen and Libya, this phenomenon took localized regional and tribal forms; in others, like Iraq and Syria, they assumed complex and often intermingling regional, sectarian, and ethnic dimensions. These dynamics undermined the prospects of political democratization, which was proclaimed by all socialist regimes as an ideal, but one that was regularly deferred.

If this deferral was legitimated in the post-independence period by serious revolutionary pursuits of economic justice or anti-colonial liberation, the sweeping reality of post-1970s neoliberalism undermined these bases of

political legitimacy. As a global phenomenon, neoliberalism is rightly traced to milestones like the overthrow of Allende's socialist and democratically elected government in Chile. But the Arab region witnessed similar tidings. Sadat's *infitah* took place at the same time as the rise of Pinochet and the Chicago Boys. All of the ten classic principles of the Washington Consensus were implemented, albeit to varying degrees, in the socialist Arab countries, leading to the dismantlement of many of the public institutions and initiatives described throughout this chapter.¹³⁰ Neoliberalization was pursued at varying points, differing in extent, timing, and motivation if not in basic qualitative features. In Algeria, the 1979 FLN Fourth Conference ushered in a long post-Boumédiène transition into so-called 'market socialism'. Decline in oil prices in the 1980s further led to the unravelling of major industrialization programmes as well as welfare initiatives. This was accompanied by the growth of a transnational political Islamic current that fed on the growing malaises of unemployment, lumpen-proletarianization, and bureaucratic corruption. Attempts to absorb these pressures through political liberalization crashed miserably. When the FLN was defeated at the ballot box by the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS, Islamic Salvation Front) in December 1991, the election was annulled and the country descended into a long and devastating civil war. By the time the Islamic insurgency was destroyed in the early 2000s, Algeria was more open than ever to the global neoliberal economy.¹³¹

In Syria, there was also an incremental transition that began with two waves of economic liberalization initiated under Hafez al-Assad, but picked up pace during the presidency of Bashar al-Assad.¹³² Between 2000 and 2005, more than 1,200 laws and decrees were issued to enhance the business environment and attract foreign and local investment.¹³³ Locally, this process produced a consolidation of capital in the hands of the 'Big 100' businessmen who had come to dominate the economy, many of whom were connected to the state leadership through kinship or economic ties.¹³⁴ While growth figures throughout the first decade of the millennium were relatively high, they were accompanied by a marked rise in income inequality, unemployment, and poverty, precipitated by the gradual economic retreat of the state and its diminishment in size. Such problems were further exacerbated by

130 As is well known, these ten principles were elaborated in J. Williamson, *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1990).

131 J. McDougal, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 324.

132 M. J. Barout, *Al-Akd al-Akhir fi Tarikh Suriya. Jadaliyat al-Jumoud wa al-Islah* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Arabi li al-Abhath wa Dirasat al-Siyassat, 2012), p. 30.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 48. 134 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

severe drought, reduced state support for agriculture, and heightened US financial sanctions seeking to isolate Syria economically. In line with all the other formerly Arab socialist countries that were languishing under the debilitating combination of economic liberalism, unyielding political repression, and a demoralizing weakness of sovereignty, Syria witnessed a wide-scale popular uprising in 2011 that eventually descended into a horrific and ongoing internationalized civil war.

The broader wave of uprisings could not be detached from the social unravelling and regional hyper-sectarianization that was ushered in by the US invasion of Iraq, a country in which the immiserating impact of prolonged and deadly sanctions far outweighed that of neoliberalism. This unravelling of Arab socialism was equally tied to the political and economic crisis of the Soviet Union, which eventually led to its collapse in 1991. The Soviet absence was ideologically debilitating: the very existence of a socialist great power on the world stage was crucial for socialist and communist parties the world over, even if its model of 'actually existing socialism' had long been questioned. Materially, in the Arab region and elsewhere, the Soviet absence further deprived socialist countries and parties of a major source of armaments, credit, and diplomatic support. None of these countries ever had the scale or capacity to fully de-link from the global economic or political systems. Their key geopolitical position on the world map, their hydrocarbon riches, and the presence of Israel as a settler-colonial project sponsored by US imperialism in their midst further drained their resources, undermined attempts at internal reform, and rendered them increasingly subject to US political, economic, and, at times, military power.

Amidst a geopolitical and socio-economic atmosphere marked by imperialist dominance, settler-colonial expansion, statist politics, neoliberal economics, gender oppression, deep social fissures, and working-class marginalization, one cannot speak of the existence of meaningful socialist policies in any Arab country today. This is a familiar global story. Yet it is one that should not negate the long history of Arab socialism, including many achievements that are all too easily forgotten, as well as failures that are commonly emphasized. As we have sought to show in this chapter, the Arab socialist tradition emerged out of conditions of colonialism and class struggle that were particular to the twentieth century. Yet, in our day and age, many of these conditions persist, assuming different names and garbs, but having the same oppressive effects. The stark structural realities of the present may well produce the conditions for socialist renewal in the future, but that is a story that is yet to unfold, let alone be told.

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Chavismo: Revolutionary Bolivarianism in Venezuela

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Chavismo refers to the set of ideas and policies of Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías (28 July 1954–5 March 2013), who was president of Venezuela from 1999 to 2013. Chávez gained popularity as the leading member of a failed *coup d'état* of young military officers on 4 February 1992. In the years to follow, he turned into the undisputed leader of a broad movement for social transformation in Venezuela based on *Bolivarianism*. Bolivarianism refers to Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), the Venezuelan liberator who fought for independence throughout South America and promoted the unification of the continent. In Venezuela, most popular movements and the governments since 1999 define themselves as Bolivarian. The social transformation process envisioned is called the Bolivarian process or Bolivarian Revolution. In twenty-first-century Venezuela Bolivarianism has become a set of political ideas, collective experiences, and values without a clearly defined programme or theoretical framework, and thus is a work in progress rather than a meticulous ideology or theory. Bolivarianism reaches across a wide ideological spectrum reflecting the diversity of political, social, and cultural influences feeding it. Chávez's extraordinary ability was to keep the different currents together while developing further and strengthening a perspective of social and political transformation with a normative orientation of *revolutionary Bolivarianism*.

In my analysis I differentiate between Bolivarianism as reflected in government policies and revolutionary Bolivarianism as a political–ideological set of ideas and practices. The first includes currents that share the ideal of true independence, anti-imperialism, and Latin American unity, but do not share socialist ideas in economics and political organization. Moreover, Bolivarianism in government adopted pragmatic and tactical decisions (e.g., alliances with sectors of private capital), distancing its Realpolitik from the

discourse and strategic political premises of the latter. Revolutionary Bolivarianism encompasses different currents in a decolonial and socialist project. It is a collective construction and delineated in certain central ideas and discourses expressed by Chávez. These include his last speech on 20 October 2012 at the first meeting with the ministers of his government after winning the presidential elections. He strongly criticized the government and demanded a great leap forward in the construction of a democratic communal socialism.¹ This is the legacy that Chávez considered his political testament.

Revolutionary Bolivarianism is a genuinely Venezuelan socialist project that started to take shape in the guerrilla movements of the 1960s.² Over the following decades it permeated the Venezuelan left and became the dominant set of ideas for the transformation of society during the presidency of Chávez (1999–2013).³

Chávez did not identify the Bolivarian Revolution as socialist during the first years of his presidency. Assumed to be anti-neoliberal at the outset, Chavismo in government proposed strengthening human and civil rights, the building of a 'participatory and protagonistic democracy', postulated in the 1999 constitution, as a third way beyond capitalism and socialism, and an economic transformation towards a 'humanist economy of solidarity'. The year 2003 saw the beginning of the building of parallel structures (especially by means of the social programmes called *missions*) with broad participation from below. The impossibility of carrying to fruition structural changes in the prevailing political and economic system; attacks by the opposition, national and transnational capital, and the United States in the face of a reformist social project;⁴ the organizational processes; and the radicalization of the movements: all combined to push the process further to the left. By 2005 the government

1 H. Chávez Frías, 'Strike at the Helm: The First Ministerial Meeting of the New Cycle of the Bolivarian Revolution, 20 October 2012', *Monthly Review Online*, 2015.

2 D. Azzellini, 'Venezuela, Guerilla Movements, 1960s–1980s', in I. Ness (ed.), *The International Encyclopaedia of Revolution and Protest* (Oxford: Wiley, 2009), pp. 34–45.

3 D. Azzellini, *Communes and Workers' Control in Venezuela: Building 21st Century Socialism from Below* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); G. Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

4 On 11 April 2002, high-ranking military officers staged a *coup d'état*, and the head of the business association was appointed president. Rank-and-file soldiers refused to obey, and a popular mass mobilization overthrew the coup on 13 April. In December 2002, private sector employers called for a 'general strike' and locked out the workers. Production at state-owned oil company PdVSA was paralysed by the management. Through popular mass mobilizations, companies were occupied, and oil production was restarted by workers taking it into their own hands. In February 2003, the entrepreneurs gave up their attempt to overthrow the government.

defined its orientation as socialist and Bolivarianism as a means of developing a socialism of the twenty-first century for Venezuela. Chávez distanced Venezuelan socialism from historical state socialism by defining freedom, democracy, and participation as fundamental elements. In line with revolutionary Bolivarianism, Chávez over time defined the Venezuelan socialist project as based on the construction of 'councilist structures' from bottom to top (workers' councils, local councils, and affinity-based councils, e.g., fishermen, students, disabled people), with the intention that the councilist structures, together with higher-level co-operation and co-ordination, would gradually lead to replacing the bourgeois state with a *communal state*.

The concrete strategy for the transformation towards socialism is based on the building of communal cycles of production and consumption, following the idea of a communal socialism. It resonates with the communard tradition of socialism, indigenous forms of communal organization, and the experiences of self-organization of Afro-Venezuelans, such as the *cumbes*.⁵ The central theoretical reference is the Hungarian-British philosopher István Mészáros. In *Beyond Capital*, specifically in the chapter 'The Communal System and the Law of Value',⁶ he details, with reference to Marx's *Grundrisse*, the idea of a communitarian and co-operative system. Chávez often made reference to the ideas of Mészáros, who was invited to Venezuela and held workshops with the government; his book *Beyond Capital* was published as single-chapter brochures and widely distributed. Communal or communitarian socialism, with its characteristics of local self-administration, workers' control, participation, direct democracy, and horizontality, connects with the concept of popular power developed by Latin American Marxists such as José Carlos Mariátegui and by Bolívar's philosophy teacher Simón Rodríguez, who in 1847 proposed a form of local self-government he named 'toparchy' (*topos* means place and *archy* means authority or government).

In matters of international relations Chávez advocated for a multipolar world, Latin American and Caribbean unity, strong South–South co-operation, and better terms of trade for the Global South. Shortly after he was re-elected president under the new constitution in December 2000, he visited several Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) countries in order

5 The maroon communes where self-emancipated (or 'runaway') slaves lived, often together with also persecuted indigenous people. Some of the *cumbes* continued as communities after the end of slavery.

6 I. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), pp. 739–70.

to promote a renewed common policy against very low oil prices. Chávez redirected Venezuela's foreign policy. Venezuela opposed the dominance of the Global North, promoted regional alliances that exclude the United States and Canada, and pursued South–South co-operation, using the country's oil wealth to promote it. Venezuela opposed the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and founded, along with Cuba, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) in 2004, in order to promote regional integration and further independence from the United States. Venezuela also actively promoted the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

The Foundations of Revolutionary Bolivarianism

The basic idea of Bolivarianism provides direct reference to the history of local, regional, national, and continental experiences of emancipatory resistance and struggle against oppression. The central historical references of revolutionary Bolivarianism are Bolívar; Simón Rodríguez (1769–1854), who frequented utopian socialist circles in early nineteenth-century France; the peasant general of the federal war, Ezequiel Zamora (1817–60),⁷ indicating the need for a social revolution beyond independence; and indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan resistance as decolonial legacy. The revolutionary reference to these historic figures can be traced back to the mid-1960s debates that divided the Communist Party of Venezuela (Partido Comunista de Venezuela, PCV), which supported the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) guerrillas. The left, along with a large popular mobilization, played a fundamental role in the 1958 overthrow of the Marcos Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. But it was subsequently marginalized by the bourgeois parties by means of the Pact of Punto Fijo (Pacto de Punto Fijo, PPF). The elite agreement PPF established governability, a capitalist economy, and alignment with the United States in a frame of formal representative democracy. It was soon followed by various other pacts with employers' associations, the Vatican, and the labour unions that built a repressive democracy with no other channels for mediation than those of the two parties sharing power. Armed organizations formed, and the PCV participated in their struggle. Between 1960 and 1962, three military uprisings in co-ordination with organizations of the left and with guerrillas

7 D. Azzellini, 'Zamora, Ezequiel (1817–1860)', in Ness (ed.), *The International Encyclopaedia of Revolution and Protest*, pp. 3706–7.

took place.⁸ In 1964, some FALN guerrilla members of the PCV began to define themselves as revolutionary Bolivarian Marxists, leading to divisions and expulsions from the party. The PCV gave up armed struggle and the dissidents formed the guerrilla PRV-FALN (Revolutionary Party of Venezuela). The PRV viewed the black and indigenous resistance, Bolívar, Rodríguez, and Zamora as the foundations of Venezuelan socialism. It postulated a civic–military uprising as the way to a Venezuelan revolution. As other groups before had done, it infiltrated into the military and recruited soldiers clandestinely. There, in connection with the history of the Venezuelan military and its social composition of lower classes up into the officer ranks, lies the cause of the politics that emerged from the military.

The guerrillas did not gain mass support. Nevertheless, they left an important legacy: revolutionary Bolivarianism. Between the end of the 1960s and the mid-1970s the political and military defeat of the guerrillas led the revolutionary left to a radical criticism of the focus theory, of the simple transfer of revolutionary experiences from eastern Europe, Cuba, or Asia, and of the authoritarianism of the communist parties. This caused different organizations to orient themselves more towards popular movements, mostly recognizing their autonomy. The PRV-FALN also put increasing emphasis on social struggles and founded PRV-Ruptura, an alliance of popular movements, social struggles, intellectuals, and cultural initiatives. In 1978–9, Chávez – as an active member of the military – was part of the five-member clandestine leadership of PRV-Ruptura.

A growing number of Venezuelan popular movements, political organizations, and progressive army sectors, with distinct origins and histories, adopted the ideas of revolutionary Bolivarianism and contributed to its collective creation. They converged in the 1970s and 1980s. Many declared themselves to be anti-authoritarian and anti-Stalinist. They were partly tied to the councilist tradition of socialism and dissidence against Soviet and Chinese party communism. Others were influenced by Guevarianism, Mariáteguism, Trotskyism, and European autonomism. They read and discussed Anton Pannekoek and Antonio Gramsci. Autonomous popular and worker movements formed. The currents of liberation theology grounded in Gustavo Gutiérrez, Frei Beto, and Camilo Torres, and popular Christian movements that fused with guerrilla movements, were present, along with ideas from national liberation movements that can be traced back to José

8 D. Azzellini, 'Venezuela, Military Uprisings, 1960–1962', in Ness (ed.), *The International Encyclopaedia of Revolution and Protest*, pp. 3450–1.

Martí in Cuba, or Augusto César Sandino in Nicaragua, and were expressed in the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions. Revolutionary Bolivarianism is also rooted in the critique of European civilization, the legacy of indigenous movements, and currents of black resistance from the United States to their social, cultural, and militant expressions in the Caribbean and Brazil. The influences comprise collective insurrectional experiences like the Venezuelan student revolt of 1987, the popular anti-neoliberal uprising *Caracazo*⁹ in 1989, the two civil–military insurrections of 1992, and 2002, when the people and the army reversed the *coup d'état* against Chávez. Chávez traced the ideology also to the thought of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Leon Trotsky, and Mao Zedong, to Antonio Negri, István Mészáros, and Jesus Christ.¹⁰

From 1980 on, Chávez and other leftist officials working at the military academy influenced thousands of young recruits. In December 1982, Chávez and other officials founded the Revolutionary Bolivarian Army 200 (Ejército Revolucionario Bolivariano-200, EBR-200), later renamed Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200 (Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200, MBR-200). MBR-200, a conspiratorial civil–military organization, developed far-reaching ideological and programmatic fundamentals, organizational, tactical, and strategic orientations, and positions on various social and political issues. Its ideological and programmatic work represents an important cornerstone of revolutionary Bolivarianism. One of the central ideologues was Kléber Ramírez, also one of the founders and commanders of the PRV-FALN, and later of *Ruptura*. The concept of a communal state and a communards' democracy go back to Ramírez. Through the 1980s MBR-200 gained in strength and experience. In response to the brutal repression of the *Caracazo* civilian allies convinced MBR-200 to pursue an armed uprising in 1992. MBR-200 deepened contacts with popular movements, organizations, and individuals. The *coup d'état* of 4 February 1992 was crushed, but it gave Chávez nationwide visibility. A second coup attempt by a different Bolivarian organization in the army followed in November 1992. It saw an even bigger civil participation than the first attempt. Nevertheless, it failed too.

9 On 27 February 1989, protests in Caracas against a price increase in local transport turned into spontaneous uprisings, which by the next day had spread to most cities in the country. A state of emergency was declared. By 4 March, the uprising had been brutally suppressed by the army and the National Guard. According to official figures, 380 people were killed. Human rights organizations speak of 3,000–10,000 deaths.

10 D. Azzellini, 'Bolivarianism, Venezuela', in Ness (ed.), *The International Encyclopaedia of Revolution and Protest*, pp. 412–16; R. Denis and PNA-M13A, 'La profecía de Alcala', *Aporrea* (2007), available at www.aporrea.org/actualidad/a32464.html.

MBR-200 transformed into a popular organization, recruiting especially among the poor and the revolutionary left. The political strategy from 1994 to 1996 was marked by building grassroots structures and by the demand for a constitutional assembly. It postulated the need for an overall structural transformation. The aim was defined as popular democracy, a direct democracy with the people as decision-makers. MBR-200 proposed a mixed economy; a federal state with five powers: legislative, judicial, executive, moral, and electoral; and a model of society based on equality, justice, and freedom. By 1996 MBR-200 had local and regional organizational structures across the entire country. In April 1997, it decided to participate in the parliamentary and presidential elections of 1998 – contrary to prior positions. The electoral alliance *Movimiento V República* (MVR, Movement of the Fifth Republic) was created. MBR-200 was dissolved, but its political project to a great extent characterized the perspective of Chávez when he became president in 1999.

Decolonialization, Constituent Power, and Socialism as Popular Power

Bolivarianism is often labelled as ‘nationalist’ and linked to the republican tradition of the French Revolution and Rousseauian principles or to an anti-imperialist Third World tradition. Thus, although it is anti-imperialist and draws historical lines with Rousseau and Third World liberation, revolutionary Bolivarianism should be analysed from a decolonial perspective. This marks a clear difference from European concepts. *El pueblo*, the people, is not a homogenizing project; the diversity remains alive in the multitude. Sovereignty lies in the people, in constituent power, and is not transferable. On the basis of these premises, revolutionary Bolivarianism seeks to redefine state and polity, defining a modernity of its own in contrast to the European modernity connected inextricably with coloniality. As Chávez stated: ‘Constituent Power allows us . . . to break away from modernizing rationalism and to open new spaces and new times, which is why it is essential that we activate it, call for it . . . break down the category of the modern . . . that pretends to solidify the time and solidify the space behind the death mask of rationalism.’¹¹

The normative orientation of revolutionary Bolivarianism aims at overcoming the nation-state (and its gradual substitution by a communal state),

¹¹ H. Chávez Frías, *El poder popular* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación y la Información, 2008), pp. 4–5.

since it is considered an integral product of colonialism and capitalism. The nation-state is not a neutral instrument or an autonomous entity, and thus cannot be the central agent in building the new socialist society. The central agent of change is constituent power. The mechanisms of transformation, the structures of self-government, and the solutions to prevailing problems must emerge from the popular movements and the organized *pueblo*. The state is thought to be the guarantor of the material conditions. Other currents of Bolivarianism are oriented towards a state-centred developmentalism, closer to the statist and nationalist tradition. They always had a strong presence in institutions, and became the dominant government discourse under Chávez's successor, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicolás Maduro.

Constituent power refers to the legitimate collective creative power inherent in human beings, the capacity to originate, design, and shape something new without having to derive it from or subject it to something that already exists. Usually its omnipotence is limited to short periods of time, while its scope is reduced to juridical categories before it is subjugated to the constituted power it legitimized. This is a conceptual contradiction and an obstacle to ongoing revolutionary transformation. The project is not to create correspondence between the political and the social but to include the production of the political in the creation of the social, as Marx describes analysing the Paris Commune.¹²

In the face of the failure of the traditional forms of organization and ideas of transformation, the direct protagonism of the popular bases without representative mediation paved its way in Venezuela. The struggles and resistance of the 1980s, the new political culture in the movements, and the experiences of the *Caracazo* and of the civic–military uprisings of 1992 brought about a paradigmatic change. The idea of a continuous constituent process extended in time became the horizon of revolutionary transformation. Alongside the growing movements, the concept became hegemonic in the political–ideological debate among the left in the 1990s, while its similarity to Antonio Negri's concept was discovered.¹³ The state ceased to be the central referent of change. The centre of the revolutionary process had become the act of creation of the new, led from below, overcoming the institutional logic of representation. 'We don't want to be government, we want to govern'

12 K. Marx, 'Second Draft of the Civil War in France', in *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), vol. XXII, pp. 515–51.

13 A. Negri, *Il potere costituente. Saggio sulle alternative del moderno* (Carnago: SugarCo, 1992); English version: *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*, trans. M. Boscaqli (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

became the main slogan of the Asamblea de Barrios (Assembly of Popular Neighbourhoods), which articulated a coalition of some 700–800 leaders and movement spokespeople in Caracas. Chávez read Negri in prison (1992–4) and acknowledged his work as an important influence in the development of the Bolivarian project.¹⁴

The proposal for a popular constituent process (*proceso popular constituyente*, PPC) was developed with the perspective of the socio-political and military construction of the revolutionary process. It aimed at building and affirming constituent power by means of organized social action, not by constitutionalist representation. A process of building structures of self-government was explicitly accompanied by the preparation of popular insurgency, understood as strategic interaction among the rebel military forces, the remaining nuclei of guerrillas, and a popular militia to be built. Since the mid-1990s, the concept of the PPC spread among movements (particularly of barrios, students and teachers, and in cultural movements) as well as through MBR-200.

Before and after the 6 December 1998 presidential elections, hundreds of constituent circles and base constituent committees, where specific topics were discussed, sprang up. Chávez won the elections with the promise to refund the republic through a constituent process. The process of drafting a new constitution in 1999, however, was more of a hybrid between protagonism and representation. The National Constituent Assembly was sovereign, but it was composed of elected representatives, with popular participation through assemblies and other mechanisms contributing proposals which were non-binding. Nevertheless, several important mechanisms were reflected in the new constitution. The most noteworthy were the citizens' assemblies and the constituent assemblies, which could make binding decisions.

The idea of a PPC lost force in the following years. With only a few exceptions, like the urban land committees organizing land use and land ownership in the barrios, and beginning in 2003 the first missions and support for co-operatives, there were not many broadly diffused experiences of protagonistic participation, while the constitutional mechanisms went practically unexploited. The government saw constituent power as an annex to representative structures and not as the central decision-making source. The traditional forces, which dominated the institutional spaces, opposed the application of the concept of constituent power to representative mechanisms, since it signified a threat to their political reproduction.

14 M. Harnecker, *Hugo Chávez Frías. Un hombre, un pueblo* (Tegucigalpa: Utopía Editorial, 2004), p. 18.

In 2005, Chávez began talking about expropriations, workers' control, and other topics connected to the PPC. A debate and some practices regarding co-management and workers' control were initiated. Some municipalities organized constituent municipal assemblies. The communal councils (CCs) as local structures of self-government emerged from below. Concerned about the bureaucratization of the transformation process, Chávez often repeated that the constituent process should never end.¹⁵ On 10 January 2007, during his swearing-in as president on the occasion of his re-election, he referred to Negri and invoked constituent power as 'permanent power, transformative power'.¹⁶ In a genuine revolutionary process, the constituent power must maintain its capacity to intervene and to shape the present. What defines a revolution is not the act of taking power, but a broad process of building the new. This is the global legacy of the Bolivarian process.

A second concept central to revolutionary Bolivarianism is *popular power*. Popular power as a path and a goal emerged forcefully from the Asamblea de Barrios in the early 1990s. Since 2005 popular power has been connected in official discourse with the building of participatory and protagonistic democracy, and later with socialism. It refers to the capacity of the marginalized and oppressed to change power relations by means of processes of organization, formation, and co-ordination for determining their own lives. 'Popular power is no different from socialism, although it alludes to a particular way of conceiving and of building it.'¹⁷ Its material content can be understood only in the specific context. Popular power 'speaks of a history (as an accepted or endured past), a present (as a political, economic, and cultural situation), and a future (visible in a strategic expectation)'.¹⁸ It is nourished by centuries of experiences, organizational forms, and struggles by subalterns who took control of a specific space for a certain period of time and attempted to build more egalitarian and democratic relationships than those they were experiencing. Popular power signifies the construction of social relations contrary to the logic of capital. By its own logic, popular power refers to the basic grassroots democratic forms: self-organization and councils. Therefore, it is not only the state or an expanded utopia that needs to be applied.¹⁹ The construction of horizontal leadership following the Zapatista logic of 'leading by obeying' is at

15 Chávez Frías, *El poder popular*, p. 34. 16 Ibid., pp. 4–5.

17 M. Mazzeo, *Introducción al poder popular*. 'El sueño de una cosa' (Buenos Aires: Editorial El Colectivo, 2007), p. 29.

18 O. Acha, 'Poder popular y socialismo desde abajo', in M. Mazzeo and O. Acha (eds.), *Reflexiones sobre poder popular* (Buenos Aires: Editorial El Colectivo, 2007), pp. 17–36 at 22.

19 Mazzeo, *Introducción al poder popular*, p. 61.

the same time the bearer of a new society.²⁰ Popular power that is currently employed throughout Latin America is not seen as an interim solution until state power is seized, as in historical concepts of dual power.

Unlike in other revolutionary processes, in Venezuela there was no destruction or collapse of the old structures, so that new structures would rise from below and fill the gaps left behind. Furthermore, by the very logic that guides it, popular power cannot be 'authorized' from above. It can be conceived neither by the state nor without it. The consolidation of popular power demands the resolution of the question of state power. Given that the state is part of a complex totality, class struggle is also expressed within the state – not to be confused with a struggle 'from within'. In the existing world system, it is the question of sovereignty (e.g., with respect to control over resources) which forces the incorporation of the question of state power, although the state is burdened with all the historical baggage of representation, nationalism, exclusion, centralization, institutional politics, separation of economic, political, and social spheres, and so on.

To a certain extent, Chávez was clear about the need to reinforce popular power (as opposed to the Allende Government in Chile, which largely prioritized institutional processes). Chávez supported the popular movements and relied considerably on their dynamics, transforming the people into a political actor. In line with revolutionary Bolivarianism, Chávez did not see the government as an expression of a duality of powers. However, in practice constituted power fought to control social processes.

Strategy for Socialist Transformation: Local Self-Government, the Communes, and the 'Communal State'

The most advanced expressions of constituent power are the CCs and communes. They are a non-representative form of local self-government based on assemblies and direct democracy. The CCs arose in 2005 at the neighbourhood level, followed by the communes in 2007 as the tier of self-government above that. Both developed from below; although their massive expansion was due to support by the state, the laws regulating them were devised only after they had become a widespread practice. They are rooted in the experience with different local self-government initiatives developed

20 M. Mazzeo, 'Introducción', in Mazzeo and Acha (eds.), *Reflexiones sobre poder popular*, pp. 7–16 at p. 13.



Fig. 22.1 Wall painting in the leftist popular neighborhood 23 de enero in Caracas: from left to right, Manuel Marulanda, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Mao Zedong, V. I. Lenin, Karl Marx, Jesus, Simón Bolívar, Alexis González Revette, Camilo Torres, Hugo Chávez, Simón Rodríguez, and Guaicaipuro. (Photograph by Dario Azzellini.)

from 2000 onwards by popular organizations, communities, and some institutions, and are bodies parallel to the representative institutions. CCs and communes were thought to play an important role in the 'new geometry of power',²¹ in reference both to the formal geography of Venezuelan democracy and to the power relations within it.²² This concept is based on the recognition that the country's geometries of power are highly unequal and anti-democratic, and that its territorial geopolitics needs to be reorganized. Chávez placed the CCs at the centre of his discourse, and promoted legal and institutional initiatives in their support. The CCs rapidly became the central mechanism for participation.

The first Law of Communal Councils, passed in April 2006 when some 5,000 CCs had already been formed, defined CCs as independent institutions. This

21 The 'new geometry of power' is a concept employed in the debates of radical geography or social geography.

22 D. Massey, 'Concepts of space and power in theory and in political practice', *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* 55 (2009), pp. 15–26.

followed the experience with the failure of prior bodies with institutional participation. The power asymmetry favoured institutional representatives and made them inadequate for facilitating grassroots decision-making. According to the law reformed in 2009, in urban areas each CC comprises between 150 and 400 households, while in rural areas it is around 30 and in indigenous areas 10–20. The CC is the general assembly of the community. The CCs form committees on different issues, depending on their needs and interests: infrastructure, health, water, sports, culture, etc. The community elects the spokesperson and an organizing committee for the council. All decisions are made by the CC. Projects are elaborated by the committees, approved by the CC, and then financed by national or regional public institutions.²³ With the CCs marginal communities have more of a voice, and the form of participation changes from individual, representative, and passive to collective, direct, and active.

In 2007, the communes emerged; a law followed in 2010. A commune is made up of several CCs (around ten in rural areas and fifteen to forty in urban areas) and other organizations within the same territory; it can develop longer-term projects over a wider area, while decisions continue to be taken in the CCs. Communes co-ordinate the CCs, social missions, and grassroots organizations so that projects are planned, implemented, and assessed jointly. Both CCs and communes strive for consensus. Spokespeople and co-ordinators are elected and can be recalled at any time by the assembly that elected them. Communes do not have to correspond to the official territorial divisions. The inhabitants of the communities, from the lowest level to the highest, determine the reference territory and their affiliation themselves.²⁴ The new boundaries refer to the (relational) social–cultural–economic space that derives from everyday life.²⁵

In 2007, President Chávez launched the idea of communal cities as a level of self-administration above the communes. Communal cities consist of the co-ordination of communes within a self-defined territory. Although some communes started to co-ordinate and declared themselves communal cities, no broader public debate or law followed.

By February 2021, the number of CCs registered had reached 48,589 and the number of communes 3,269.²⁶ Until the massive economic crisis that began in 2014, their projects were funded extensively. This had far-reaching implications for the model of the state, whose public welfare function is no

23 Azzellini, *Communes and Workers' Control*, pp. 84–123. 24 Ibid., pp. 81–124, 243–51.

25 D. Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 119–48.

26 See <http://consulta.mpcmunas.gob.ve>, last accessed 25 February 2020.

longer the responsibility of a specialized bureaucracy, but is realized through transfers of financial and technical resources to the communities. Nevertheless, the boundaries of the responsibilities of CCs and communes remain unclear, while their relations with the old institutions are variable and constantly redefined.

The structure of councils is thought to co-operate and converge at higher levels of organization, in order to replace the bourgeois state with a communal state. The term was coined by Chávez in January 2007. In this manner, he picked up a concern originating with anti-systemic forces. As Chávez further specified, the future communal state must be subordinated to popular power, which would replace bourgeois civil society. This would overcome the rift between the economic, the social, and the political spheres – between civil society and political society – which underlies capitalism and the bourgeois state. It would also prevent, at the same time, the over-centralization that characterized the countries of *real socialism*.²⁷ This implies a profound transformation of constituted power and a resignification of the state, although it is not fully reflected in the legal definition, according to which the communal state is:

a form of socio-political organization, founded in the Social State of Law and Justice established in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in which power is exercised directly by the people, by means of communal self-governments with an economic model of social property and endogenous and sustainable development that permits the achievement of supreme social happiness of Venezuelans in the socialist society. The basic structural cell of the communal state is the Commune.²⁸

The communal state was declared by Chávez to be the normative orientation for the transition to socialism. The concept was widely adopted by popular movements and organizations opening up a perspective on how to overcome the logic of capital. Nevertheless, most public institutions and representatives of the government party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV), worked effectively against it. Although popular initiatives to create communes multiplied from 2010 on, the assigned ministry did not register any communes until 2012, when it was obligated to do so because of protests from communes. Anacaona Marin of the El Panal Commune in the barrio 23 de Enero of Caracas explains:

We knew that the path towards socialism was going to be demonized, that contradictions would pop up everywhere, inside and outside . . . we are not

27 Chávez Frías, *El poder popular*, p. 67. 28 Ley Orgánica de las Comunas (2010).

only resisting imperialism. We are also resisting old forms of production and their diverse forms of domination: from the organization of education and affects, to the organization of the formal political sphere and the economy . . . The communal subject is the one that affirms that capitalism is not a natural occurrence, it is an imposition. The communes are counter-hegemonic spaces with a vocation for hegemony. From our commune, we aim to show that another organization of society is possible . . . That means combining new economic relations with an exercise of power in the commune's territory.²⁹

El Panal Commune comprises some 13,000 people, who started organizing self-government structures years before the commune law was promulgated. It is organized by the Alexis Vive Patriotic Force, a revolutionary organization with deep roots in the barrio. Well-organized communes are determined to advance in the construction of a socialist communal system. The rural Commune El Maizal is another example. It consists of twenty-two CCs, of which twelve are part of the municipality of Simón Planas in the state of Lara and ten are part of a municipality in the neighbouring state of Portuguesa. It is located on 2,200 hectares of land expropriated under the Chávez government. Over time El Maizal has had numerous conflicts with institutions. It occupied and took over nearby land and mismanaged greenhouses and stock-farming facilities owned by the state and a university. When Ángel Prado, the main spokesperson of El Maizal, won the municipal elections of Simón Planas, the result was invalidated and a PSUV mayor imposed. Since 2017, the commune has been engaged in forming a communal city as a federation of four communes in the two neighbouring states. This has sparked more opposition, as Prado explains:

The principal enemy is the right-wing, because the communal city at some point will imply 'communalizing' the territory. That project involves a broader scope and more power, in particular taking charge of [the] means of production: factories, companies, etc. . . . The bourgeoisie, for economic reasons, wants to put the brakes on Chavismo. Sadly, the reformist sectors in our camp are also looking to rein in on the tendencies and political currents that threaten the privileges that some politicians in our government, or people close to them, have become accustomed to.³⁰

29 C. Pascual Marquina, 'The Commune Is the Supreme Expression of Participatory Democracy: A Conversation with Anacaona Marin of El Panal Commune', *Venezuelanalysis* (2019), <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14435>.

30 R. Vaz, "'The Commune Holds the Solution to the Crisis', Interview with Ángel Prado', *Investig'Action* (2018).

Democratization of the Administration of the Means of Production

The second core issue in revolutionary Bolivarianism in order to pursue the envisioned transformation towards socialism is the collective and democratic control over the means of production. Over time the central orientations came to be communal enterprises controlled by the communes and workers' control of state industries. The workers' control movement connects with peasants and communities and supports the construction of a communal state. However, democratization of the management of the means of production has been one of the most controversial and conflictive issues in the Bolivarian process. Workers' initiatives and government measures to increase workers' participation in the management of their companies are in sharp contrast to institutional actions that intend to inhibit and reduce such participation.

Government policies on forms of collective ownership and administration of the means of production and the models promoted have constantly changed since 1999.³¹ The first basic orientations were formulated in the 1999 constitution. However, what paved the way for legislation, measures, and social practices that look to a structural transformation of the economy, was the protagonism of the workers and popular sectors in the defeat of the employers' lockout in 2002–3 and of the previous *coup d'état* in April 2002. The new orientation of economic policy after 2003 included the promotion of co-operatives and co-management models, as well as an anti-imperialist orientation, such as limitations on international investors and an orientation towards food sovereignty. The government concentrated more on building a state productive sector and organizing the distribution. The companies occupied by workers during the lockout were left to the courts to handle by the government. It was only in 2005, after the officially declared socialist orientation, that it began to treat the company takeovers as a political issue. In 2005, it also began to expropriate and nationalize industries, companies of strategic importance, and unproductive companies (beyond the nationalizations of the oil sector and the expropriations of landed estates). Nevertheless, Venezuela always remained a mixed economy with dominance by the private sector.

At the beginning of 2005, President Chávez announced his support for workers' control. Mainly through his initiative, the government implemented

31 Azzellini, *Communes and Workers' Control*, pp. 157–231.

in some state-owned industries, such as the aluminium smelter Alcasa and the paper factory Invepal, a model of co-management that proposed a path towards workers' control. In spite of important advances, the initiative in Alcasa encountered resistance and occasioned sabotage at all levels of the company, of the basic industries state-holding Venezuelan Corporation of Guayana (Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, CVG), and of the regional and national administration.³²

The initiative to build workers' councils emerged from some factories taken over by their workers and was picked up and promoted by Chávez. Venezuela had no movement of company occupations at the level of that in Argentina, where the crisis of 2000–1 led to hundreds of worker takeovers of production under self-management.³³ For a long time, occupations were very isolated. The first co-ordination emerged in 2006 as an alliance of a dozen co-managed or occupied companies. The first workers' council was formed in Sanitarios Maracay, a ceramic bathroom fixtures factory, which was abandoned by its owner and occupied by its workers. After more than four years of struggles, Chávez ordered the factory's expropriation in December 2010.

In 2007, Chávez advanced the idea that workers should establish socialist workers' councils. In some state-owned industries and institutions workers followed his call. In the majority of cases, workers' control was hampered and aborted by the responsible institutions. In 2008, some activists in the Ministry of Work, together with workers from a growing number of occupied companies, state companies, and institutions, promoted a forum to share experiences and discuss possible models of socialist administration: the Socialist Workers' Councils. For two years they were a central forum for discussing models of workers' councils and socialist economic administration.³⁴ The pressure from below led some institutions to begin, as of 2010, to allow workers' councils, although there was as yet no law in that regard. In the face of increasing pressure from workers many state-owned companies changed strategy and began to take the initiative in establishing councils, reducing them to workers' representatives for claims and work organization.

32 Ibid., pp. 202–26.

33 M. Vieta, *Workers' Self-Management in Argentina: Contesting Neo-Liberalism by Occupying Companies, Creating Cooperatives, and Recuperating Autogestión* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

34 Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Trabajo y Seguridad Social (MINTRAB), *La gestión socialista de la economía y las empresas. Propuesta de trabajadores(as) al pueblo y gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (Conclusiones del tercer seminario nacional sobre formación y gestión socialista, Valencia, 18./19/4/2008)* (2008); Consejos Socialistas de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de Venezuela, *1 Encuentro Nacional de Consejos Socialistas de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores de Venezuela* (2009).

The most far-reaching plan for a process towards workers' control was the Guayana Socialist Plan for 2009–19 for the basic industries of the CVG. The state-holding brought together seventeen basic companies in Bolívar state, the most important industrial centre for processing the country's raw materials. The plan can be summarized as the construction of three large corporations of iron, steel, and aluminium under workers' control, which would then form a single company. The plan was elaborated in workshops and commissions with workers from all basic industries and government representatives. Chávez himself participated in discussions with the workers and CVG representatives in one weekend workshop. The plan's workers' assembly developed a socialist production model and a work plan for the transition. Following a proposal of the workers, the councils were not established by decree, but were to be built according to the initiative of the workers themselves. However, while several aspects of the plan were applied, no advances were made in matters of workers' control.

In reaction to the strong attacks on the process of workers' control, activists from Alcasa and other companies organized the First National Meeting on Workers' Control and Workers' Councils, held in the aluminium hut Sidor's auditorium in Guayana City on 20–22 May 2011. It brought together more than 900 participants from workers' councils, occupied companies, and labour unions. The debates focused on analysis of the situation, the struggle strategies, and organizational proposals. Three great obstacles were identified: first, attacks by the opposition; secondly, the existence of sectors that 'conceal their real interests with a supposed revolutionary discourse'³⁵ and sabotage workers' control from within the Bolivarian process itself and the lack of any regulatory basis; and, finally, workers' depoliticization, apathy, scepticism, individualism, and consumerism, the fragmentation of the labour movement, and the absence of strategic planning.

Meanwhile workers of many state-owned companies developed initiatives and struggles for workers' control. Mobilizations and regional meetings also continued. Although Chávez decreed the Organic Law of Labour and Workers (April 2012), which mentioned workers' councils, a legal framework never followed. Many workers who had been involved in the establishment of workers' councils have been persecuted and accused of counter-revolutionary activities by their company directors. A few weeks after Chávez's death on 5 March 2013 a wave of conflicts in state companies broke

³⁵ Encuentro Nacional por el Control Obrero (ENCO), *Sistematización del Encuentro Nacional por el Control Obrero y los Consejos de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras* (2011).

out, most of them not about wages or strictly labour issues but about the management of the companies. Workers were demanding and taking control of factories as a step towards socialism and the fulfilment of the needs of the masses. In June 2013, the First Workers' Congress: Balance and Challenges of Workers' Control and the Workers' Councils for the Construction of Socialism was held at Sidor and drew 450 workers from 81 companies.³⁶

The majority of state companies experienced almost constant conflicts over issues of participation, working conditions, corruption, and inefficiency of the government administration. Nevertheless, the last peak of struggles for workers' control was in 2013. Since then, workers' struggles have continued to arise, but are much less demanding of direct control. The focus of workers' control has moved to the construction of companies controlled by communes and the occupation of smaller and medium-sized companies by organized communities together with workers.

The two most important struggles for workers' control in 2013 took place in two huge state-owned food-processing companies. One was Aceites Diana, the largest national producer of oils and margarine, which supplied 35 per cent of the national demand for margarine, along with mayonnaise, sauces, and soups. Eighty per cent of its production was distributed through state marketing networks. Aside from the central factory, it has five others. It was nationalized and put under state management with workers' control in 2008 after the owners had gradually reduced it to bankruptcy. When the minister of food named a new general manager on 26 July 2013, without consulting the workers, they rejected the appointment and kept up production while mobilizing against it. On 15 August, President Maduro confirmed the designation of a new general manager accepted by the workers because he agreed to respect the decision-making mechanisms and participation already achieved.³⁷

The second case was the struggle of the workers of Lácteos Los Andes, which produces milk, cheese, yogurt, and juices and feeds millions of Venezuelans every day. After renovations, the company had three main factories and thirty-seven smaller units. President Chávez had nationalized it in 2008 to counter the scarcity of milk and dairy products intentionally caused by private industry. Supposedly, control was to be handed over to the workers gradually. When there was no definitive progress on participation,

36 Comisión de Sistematización – PCCT, *Primer Congreso de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras: Balance y desafíos del control obrero y los consejos de trabajadores y trabajadoras en la construcción del socialismo*, Ciudad Guayana, 21, 22 y 23 de junio de 2013 (2013).

37 Azzellini, *Communes and Workers' Control*, pp. 227–9.

the workers formed a workers' council and committees for all parts of the company. Since March 2013, they have been calling attention to a decline in production that ultimately amounted to 40 per cent. Maintenance of the factory has been neglected, and the money to pay for it has disappeared. The workers blamed the management, which they accused of corruption, and the food minister. In August they intensified their struggle, demanding the firing of the management and progress towards workers' control. After various workers' meetings with representatives of the president, President Maduro removed the directors of Lácteos Los Andes. The workers' proposal of changing to a model of workers' control and appointing a manager elected by the workers remained under discussion. In the following weeks such a restructuring of the management model was agreed on.³⁸

Nevertheless, in the end no progress was made. Both industries, and many others, were ruined further by administrative inefficiency, unionists and workers' control activists were dismissed, and the companies sealed 'strategic alliances' with private capital without any tangible results. The reasons for this were multiple, among them classist mistrust on the part of ministry employees of workers' participation and management, a state-centric view of workers' control as unfeasible, inefficiency, and corruption, but also the aforementioned low engagement of many workers. Additionally, the highly polarized political situation because of the violent opposition protests of 2013–14 also contributed to reduce workers' protest. President Maduro has also been much less inclined towards workers' control than Chávez, who advanced workers' control with personal initiatives. Maduro is a unionist from the Bolivarian Socialist Workers' Front, which has actively opposed workers' control.

Whereas during their first years most CCs and communes concentrated on repairing homes and infrastructure, around 2007 productive projects began increasing. Many see the socio-productive development of the communes as a necessity for the envisioned socialist transformation. Institutions and state-owned enterprises also began to adopt and promote models of communal co-operatives. In 2008, CCs and communes started to establish co-operatives they administered collectively, the enterprises of communal social production (EPSCs). The necessity of forming community-controlled companies as an alternative to worker-controlled co-operatives emerged in 2006. By then, as a result of institutional programmes and incentives, more than 70,000 co-operatives were in operation; however, these did not permit advanced

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 229–30.

planning of a communal production cycle (production, processing, and distribution). Their work did not necessarily correspond to the interests of the communities. Over the years, thousands of EPSCs have been founded. They principally operate in sectors that respond to pressing social needs, such as food and construction materials production or transport services; textile manufacturers, agricultural companies, bakeries, and shoemakers are also common.³⁹

Communes and workers have also jointly occupied and taken over underperforming state companies or abandoned private companies. This is the case in the former beer brewery Brahma-AmBev in Barquisimeto, abandoned in 2013. Thirty of its workers occupied it and started managing it together with the 'José Pío Tamayo' Commune. They started selling filtered deep-well water, established a car wash, and opened a selling point for chicken supplied by the nearby worker-recuperated company Beneagro. In 2014, they founded the EPSC 'Proletarios Uníos' (United Proletarians). The EPSC faced various eviction attempts by the authorities of the oppositional regional government. In 2016, Proletarios Uníos successfully started the production of industrial animal feed.

Problems, Critiques, and Contradictions

The confluence of state-centric and anti-systemic orientations delineated new paths of social transformation, different from previous strategies. With the deepening of the transformation process, points of conflict proliferated with antagonistic sectors at national and international levels, as well as between constituent power and constituted power in Venezuela itself. The ability to reform collided ever more frequently with internal resistance and the inherent limits of the bourgeois state, the capitalist system, and the rentier logic of Venezuela's oil export-based economy. Therefore, workers' control of state-owned industries faced the strongest opposition. The affinity-based councils that were created did not evolve into structures of broad participation and became mostly mechanisms that convened only on rare occasions to discuss law initiatives. And although CC and communes are still the most successful form of self-organization and do not only persist but also advance, some CCs also stopped working as soon as economic support by the state vanished due to the crisis and others are not autonomous from institutional interference.

39 Ibid., pp. 164–71, 252–8.

The process of building self-government structures was marked from a very early stage by both co-operation and conflict. There is an inherent contradiction between representative democracy and its institutions, on the one hand, and the structures of self-government, on the other. In a representative system, the constituted and the constituent power obey opposing logics. The logic of political representation within a hierarchical framework tends to call any non-representational body into question. Public servants and representatives, who are mainly accountable structurally to their superiors, are wary about letting the people decide. They tend, for the most part, to view self-government structures as bodies responsible for implementing institutional decisions. Those who take part in CCs and communes regard them as embryonic forms of a structure that will replace the state and its old institutions. Local and regional administrations often see them therefore as a direct threat. Contradictions and clashes arise especially where they are in direct competition for resources.

The role of Chávez has also been ambivalent. *Chavista* discourse strengthened the self-confidence of the poor and of the popular movements. He assumed a maximally important role, directing public attention towards little-known initiatives from below, thereby achieving their dissemination and massification. He was seen as an ally and a guarantor of a process of protagonistic, inclusive transformation on the part of the popular movements, which took him as a reference in their increasing conflicts with the institutions. The centrality of Chávez, however, also created difficulties for the organic growth of popular initiatives, given that mayors, governors, and some institutions were more engaged in artificially creating a large number of initiatives endorsed by Chávez than in supporting a qualitative growth from below.

Owing to the internal dynamics of the transformation process, the spaces of popular power have to be built with and against constituted power. The main contradiction lies then in the asymmetry of power. Constituted power is structurally in a position of strength because it controls resources and institutions. Prado from El Maizal states: 'Unfortunately, there are big contradictions inside the state, between the state and the popular social movements, and between the state and the Commune. Because the government is very powerful economically, it has the capacity to make big decisions, and sometimes with a single blow, it can put an end to interesting experiences.'⁴⁰

40 Vaz, 'The Commune Holds the Solution to the Crisis'.

While state support has played an important role – especially during the Chávez government – by helping disseminate and strengthen many processes of local self-organization, it has been, at the same time, inhibiting and limiting them. Attempts at co-optation, the imposition of agendas and projects, and welfare-based paternalistic practices constantly threaten and distort autonomous popular organization. The centrality of the state brings a growing bureaucratization which impedes transformation and tends towards institutional administration of social processes.

Chávez was well aware of the impasse. Less than two weeks after his fourth re-election as president of Venezuela and only months before his death on 5 March 2013, he delivered a very critical speech at a cabinet meeting. The speech came to be known as ‘El Golpe de Timón’ (‘Strike at the Helm’⁴¹), and is still the central reference for radical and rank-and-file *Chavistas*. Chávez offered a radical critique of the way in which the process of social transformation was obstructed, insisted on fundamental changes in the entire government structure, and advocated an immediate leap forward in the creation of the communal state.

After Chávez’s death in 2013 the broad alliance of (often critical) support for the government held together by his charismatic personality and political ability began a process of fragmentation. The election of right-wing Mauricio Macri in Argentina (2015) and the parliamentary coup against Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (2016) brought the efforts of strengthening regional alliances to a halt. The loss of regional allies opened the path for international attacks on Venezuela. Due to a severe drop in oil prices from 2013 Venezuela entered a deep economic and political crisis, which was accelerated by an escalating financial and economic blockade, the confiscation of Venezuelan assets outside the country, and the recognition of a self-declared Venezuelan president from the opposition by the US and European governments. Military threats and covert operations by US forces and their regional allies, especially Colombia, increased. The unexpected turn to the right of Lenin Moreno, elected in 2017 as Rafael Correa’s successor in Ecuador, and the coup in Bolivia in November 2019 meant further severe blows.

During his 2013 electoral campaign, President Maduro acknowledged the centrality of communes. In 2013, increasing workers’ struggles and occupations forced Maduro to step in and negotiate the gradual move to workers’ control in state-owned companies.⁴² Communes used to mobilize by occupying

41 Chávez Frías, ‘Strike at the Helm’.

42 Azzellini, *Communes and Workers’ Control*, pp. 227–32.

inefficient institutions. However, after the violent mobilizations of the opposition intensified, internal conflicts in *Chavismo* were more often suppressed by the government and the institutions. CCs and communes no longer occupied a central space in government discourses, and the idea of the communal state disappeared completely. The ‘Strike at the Helm’ did not take place. On the contrary, bureaucratization has increased and critical voices in both the party and the government have been marginalized.

Several currents, groups, and individuals kept their distance from the Maduro Government, accusing it to different degrees of wrong political decisions to mismanagement, corruption, neoliberal policies, and authoritarianism. Most of the groups and individuals claim themselves to be *Chavistas* and accuse the government of deviation or betrayal of the *Chavista* ideals. In August 2020, the rupture culminated in ten smaller parties of the governmental electoral alliance Gran Polo Patriótico (GPP), led by the PSUV, forming a new electoral alliance. Among the parties forming the Popular Revolutionary Alternative (Alternativa Popular Revolucionaria, APR) are also several leftist organizations with a long history in Bolivarianism and support for Chávez, such as the Homeland for All Party (Patria Para Todos, PPT), the PCV, and the Tupamaro Party.

The parliamentary elections in December 2020 were boycotted by most opposition parties. Turnout was only just over 30 per cent. The GPP–PSUV won almost 70 per cent of the votes, two opposition alliances won 18.76 per cent and 4.18 per cent, respectively, and the APR 2.73 per cent. In polarized Venezuela, any break off from the government ended always in electoral insignificance. Therefore, some currents of revolutionary Bolivarianism assign more importance to strengthening popular struggles, building social and economic alternatives, and forcing the government to a ‘strike at the helm’. Some support leftist candidates in the PSUV, others dismiss electoral options completely. Finally, external factors, such as oil prices, the political, financial, and economic attacks, and even a possible US military intervention, will also play a decisive role regarding the future of revolutionary Bolivarianism.

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LEFT SOCIALISMS

23

The London Bureau

WILLY BUSCHAK

The Bolshevik revolutionary Leo Trotsky had an entirely negative judgement about the London Bureau: 'a very deceptive community of interests without any content, without any perspective, without any future'.¹ The Black Caribbean revolutionary George Padmore came to a very different opinion: the London Bureau meant 'hope and courage to the oppressed coloured races'.² The London Bureau was the short name used for an international organization of independent socialist parties existing between 1930 and 1939. Its secretariat was located most of the time in London, hence the name London Bureau. Founded in August 1930 as the International Association, in 1933 it became the International Committee of Independent, Left Socialist Revolutionary Parties. In 1935 it changed its name to the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity. The Bureau dissolved in 1939 to be succeeded by the International Revolutionary Marxist Centre (IRMC).

The Bureau's political actions and reflections centred around the question of how to realize international working-class unity on a revolutionary socialist basis. Lack of unity, the Bureau believed, was the main reason for all setbacks the labour movement had suffered since the Russian Revolution. As the different names indicate, the Bureau saw itself as a lever for bringing a new International to life, but did not pretend to be already this new International. The Bureau's first hope was merging the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), the Comintern, and the Bureau itself into a new international organization. During this phase, the Bureau called itself modestly the International Association or International

1 Leon Trotsky, 'To Comrade Sneevliet on the IAG Conference', 26 February 1935, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934–1935)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), p. 191.

2 *A New Hope for World Socialism: The Resolutions Adopted at the Revolutionary Socialist Congress, Paris, February 19th to 25th 1938, Together with the Introductory Speeches* (London: International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity, 1938), p. 29.

Committee. In 1935/6 the name changed slightly – there is not much difference between a committee and a bureau – but the perspective changed greatly. With the people's front policy, the LSI and the Comintern had deviated so much from class struggle that they could no longer be revolutionized, the Bureau believed, and hence it no longer saw itself as a loose association, but as the only international community or bureau working for revolutionary socialist unity. From 1935 onwards, the Bureau organized no more conferences, but congresses, although they were mostly not much bigger than a conference. The Bureau placed its hope on a successful revolution in Spain, which would become the backbone for a new Workers' International. With the defeat of the Spanish Revolution this hope vanished. The Bureau again changed name and perspective and became a simple centre, a rallying point for the few organizations left that considered themselves as revolutionary and Marxist.

The Bureau's Conferences and Congresses

The London Bureau organized three conferences and three congresses. The founding conference took place in August 1930 in Letchworth, during a summer school of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Left-wing socialists from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Austria, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, and New Zealand discussed options for a socialist strategy during the crisis, for redistribution of wealth, socialization of the key sources of economic power, and replacing capitalism with world political and economic organization. The International Association was formed in order to push for a bolder socialist policy of the LSI and for international unity.

The second conference was held on 5–6 May 1932 in Berlin, at the peak of the worldwide economic crisis. Twenty-three delegates represented seven organizations from six countries. The conference marked the definitive organizational rupture between the LSI and the Bureau, as left socialists had already created parties of their own in Germany and the Netherlands, and the ILP was about to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. The conference criticized the LSI's policy of co-operation with bourgeois parties and accused the Comintern of blocking unity by assigning the label of social-fascism to almost everybody who was not a communist. Most important in the imminent future, the Berlin Conference declared, was the formation of a workers' united front against fascism.³

3 Confidential. Conference of left-wing parties and groups in Berlin, 5 and 6 May 1932, ILP Archives, British Library of Politics, Economics and Sociology, London School of Economics.

When they next came together, at the 'International Conference of Independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties and Groups', on 27–28 August 1933, in Paris (thirty-nine delegates and sixteen guests from fourteen organizations and eleven countries),⁴ the left socialist parties had to deal with a major catastrophe: the establishment of national socialist dictatorship in Germany and the destruction of its labour movement. The LSI and Comintern had prepared the way for the catastrophe, the Bureau argued, because both had obstructed the creation of a workers' united front. Paul Louis from the Parti d'Unité Proletarienne (PUP) tried to go deeper into the analysis: national socialists could accede to power because the working class was no longer revolutionary. Hugo Urbahns from the German Leninbund (Lenin League) and the Russian social revolutionary Isaak Sternberg underlined how urgent it was to renew socialist theories in order to avoid future catastrophes. The Bureau was not yet ripe for such radical conclusions. Most of the time was spent in a lengthy discussion as to when and how to set up a new International, and with whom. It was finally agreed that the starting point should be a world congress of all revolutionary organizations, be they within or without one of the existing Internationals, and the elaboration of a set of principles for the new International.

The Bureau's first congress took place fifteen months later, again in Paris, on 14–16 February 1935. In the meantime, the Austrian labour movement was made illegal and the Asturian miners uprising in October 1934 was defeated. The world market was torn, the economy in chaos, so that fascism was everywhere on the rise, the congress analysed. Although the Socialist Workers' Party (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei, SAP), pillar of the London Bureau, had an elaborate theory of fascism, worked out mainly by Fritz Sternberg, a disciple of Rosa Luxemburg, the Bureau's resolutions never drew a difference between national socialism and fascism. The two denominations were used interchangeably. Fascism, the congress postulated, could be attacked only by a 'revolutionary assault on the capitalist class and their State' and by the 'revolutionary conquest' of power.⁵ The inflationary use of the word 'revolutionary' did little to hide the fact that none of the parties and groups present had a very precise idea of what was meant by 'revolutionary assault' and 'revolutionary conquest'. With fascism on the rise, war again seemed to loom around the corner. The congress asked workers not to

4 International Conference of Independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties and Groups held in Paris on Sunday and Monday, 27–28 August 1933, Sneeveliet Archive, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

5 'Internationale Konferenz der revolutionären sozialistischen Parteien', *Neue Front* 3 (1935), pp. 4–5.

engage in a war of democratic states against fascism, but to declare a general strike against the war and practice revolutionary defeatism – to act in favour of their own country's defeat, independently of whether their country was democratic or not, whether it was allied to the Soviet Union or not, and whether the adversary was a fascist state or not. Karl Kilbom from the Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti (SKP) was the only one arguing that the tremendous difference in rights and liberties between democratic and fascist states should be considered.⁶ The Bureau's majority was still convinced that Lenin's twenty-year-old slogan was valid advice for the 1930s.

The Spanish Revolution and the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification, POUM) dominated the Bureau's second congress, held in Brussels, on 31 October–2 November 1936. The attendance was rather large and the public echo considerable: 150 delegates from 33 organizations in 12 countries participated. The congress condemned the decision of European democracies not to intervene in the war and welcomed the Soviet Union's announcement that it would deliver weapons to the republican Spanish government. The congress warned, however, against any effort to water down the class character of the Spanish Civil War. Another lengthy resolution on the fight against war was adopted, repeating in essence what the Bureau had already said two years ago in Paris. Soviet Russia still was a hot potato. No agreement could be reached about a resolution presented by the Polish socialist Józef Kruk, and the entire matter was referred back for further discussion at the next congress. Complete consensus existed on the condemnation of antisemitism. The congress protested against 'the political and economic persecution to which millions of Jews are subjected' and declared that it was the 'duty of the working-class movement to demand full national, political, civil and economic equality for the Jewish working population'.⁷

The congress had no doubt that the Spanish Revolution would turn into a European revolution. After years of setbacks and retreats of the international labour movement, the turn-around apparently was here. The Bureau's dream – building a new International backed by a revolution – seemed about to come true. The world congress of all independent socialist

6 Protokoll der internationalen Konferenz der unabhängigen sozialistischen Parteien vom 14.–16. Februar 1935, in Paris. Collection International Committee of Left Socialist Revolutionary Parties, Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, Stockholm.

7 *A Lead to World Socialism, on Spain, War, Fascism and Imperialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress, Brussels, October 31st–November 2nd, 1936* (Barcelona: Nova Iberia, n.d.), p. 28.



Fig. 23.1 Members of POUM and other republicans march in Barcelona, Spain, 1936. (Photograph by Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group via Getty Images.)

parties that the London Bureau had strived for since 1933 came within reach. Immediately after Brussels, invitations were sent out for a new congress in the spring of 1937 in Barcelona. Several Bureau parties sent members to Barcelona to assist the POUM in its preparation. However, the Congress never took place. As a consequence of Soviet support for republican Spain, the POUM was first marginalized and then suppressed. The Bureau had to

concentrate not on building a new International, but on saving the lives of Spanish revolutionaries threatened by Stalinist persecution.

Analysing the reasons for the defeat in Spain was the Bureau's first preoccupation when it came together for another congress, again in Paris, on 19–24 February 1938. Forty people from twenty-seven organizations, representing thirteen countries, attended. As happens often with organizations in decline, the discussion got lost in mutual accusations. Phrases like 'lack of ideological clarity' and 'too much proximity to people's front policies' floated through the meeting room. The popular front policy with its effect of watering down social revolution was seen as mainly responsible for the Spanish failure. In principle, 'the increasing chaos of the Capitalist world provides a great opportunity for an advance towards Socialism', the congress declared. 'But unfortunately, the international working-class movement is not in a position to seize this opportunity',⁸ as the LSI and Comintern had both 'deserted revolutionary Marxist principles'. The LSI was characterized as 'part of the general staff of world Capitalism' and the Comintern as a 'reformist organisation' and 'international instrument of the Stalinist reactionary bureaucracy'. Logically there was no hope of bringing both or one of them 'back to the road of the class struggle'. Hope was only with 'the closest collaboration of all Revolutionary Marxists and genuine (anti-Stalinist) Communists', only as a result of their collaboration could a revolutionary international emerge. Although the congress was again not able to define a joint position about the Soviet Union – was there still anything socialist in it, or not? – it called for the Soviet Union's defence against capitalist attacks. A forthcoming war would not be a war of democratic countries against fascism but a war about imperialist interests, the congress insisted, and called again upon workers to resist 'all proposals for unity with the capitalist class' in such a war. A couple of practical decisions were taken, like the publication of an international journal and the creation of an international fund to assist parties and individuals suffering from persecution. The decisions were, however, never realized.⁹

After the Paris congress, the Bureau fell into deep silence. Months passed by before it managed to organize a small co-ordination meeting on 27–28 August 1938 in Paris. That none of the practical decisions taken in February had so far been realized did not bother anybody. More interesting was organiz-

8 *A New Hope for World Socialism*, p. 7. 9 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

ing a witch-hunt against the SAP, which was involved in a process of concentration of German socialist exile groups. This was just Popular Front policy disguised, the Bureau grumbled, and asked the SAP to leave. Founded in order to bring independent socialist organizations together, the Bureau ended by excluding such organizations and came close to being a sectarian organization. Mainly responsible for tightening ideological discipline were the International Association of Communist Oppositions and its member the Independent Labor League of America (ILLA), which had recently joined the Bureau. On 12 September 1938, at the height of the Munich crisis, most of the Bureau parties met in Geneva (the conference was continued in October 1938 in Brussels) and decided to outsource one of the Bureau's main tasks, the fight against the war, to a new organization, the International Workers' Front against the War (IWWFAW). What the IWWFAW had to say about the coming war did not differ from what the Bureau had expressed previously: 'Two groups of brigands will come to grips for a new partition of the earth' – that would be the essence of the war.¹⁰ Workers should apply the tactics of revolutionary defeatism everywhere. Some, like the French Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan (PSOP), the ILP, and the German Group 'Neuer Weg' (New Way, a break-away from the SAP), argued now like Karl Kilbom: revolutionary defeatism would prepare Hitler's victory. They were overruled. With the foundation of the IWWFAW, there was not much work left for the London Bureau, which convened a final conference in Paris on 26 April 1939, where it dissolved. Immediately afterwards, the conference participants set up a new body, the IRMC, which was just a shrunken version of the Bureau. The IRMC disappeared without any ado in the first war months, while the IWWFAW established a secretariat in New York in 1939, which moved in 1940 to Mexico, as the secretary, Marceau Pivert, was expelled from the United States. From time to time the IWWFAW still issued a bulletin until it also ceased to exist in 1941.

The Bureau's Structure

The London Bureau had a very rudimentary organizational structure. Between congresses, a small committee, which was also called a bureau, came together in order to discuss matters of urgency or to prepare another congress. Between May 1932 and February 1939, fifteen meetings of the small committee took place, nine of them in Paris, the rest in Brussels, Letchworth (during ILP

¹⁰ *Par-dessus les frontières les mains se rendent. Manifestes et résolutions adoptées par la conférence de Genève (12 de Septembre) et de Bruxelles (29–30 Octobre 1938)* (Paris: Front Ouvrier International Contre la Guerre, 1939), p. 1.

summer schools), London, or Amsterdam. The day-to-day work was carried out by a secretary. Until May 1934, the job was done by John Paton from the ILP, based in London. When he stepped down, P. J. Schmidt from the *Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij* (OSP) ran the secretariat until August 1935 in Amsterdam. Afterwards the secretariat was moved to London again and Fenner Brockway took over. In February 1939, the secretariat was transferred to Paris and entrusted to Julián Gorkin (POUM), who had not much to do in this function as the Bureau was already in the process of dissolution. Gorkin also became secretary of the IRMC, with Marceau Pivert secretary of the IWWFAW.

The London Bureau's financial resources were scarce. From 1933 to 1935, only the ILP and the OSP paid any substantial fee. With the POUM's affiliation to the Bureau, the situation improved only temporarily, as the party was already illegalized in 1937. Due to the disastrous financial situation, the Bureau never managed to publish a printed journal. A hectographed bulletin did not come out before August 1934 and appeared only irregularly afterwards. In 1937, not even a single copy of the bulletin was issued. Printed congress minutes were published only twice, in 1936 and 1938. Communication between the small committee and the organizations affiliated to the Bureau was complicated. This was the 1930s, long before the internet, e-mail, and mobile phones were invented, when even telephones were not yet in widespread use and anything beyond local phone calls was expensive and complicated. Communication thus came down to sending letters by normal mail, and, although the postal service was fast, it took at least two days for a letter written in London to reach the desk of its addressee in Paris. Air traffic connections already existed between major European cities, but plane tickets were too expensive for the poor London Bureau. Travelling was thus a matter of sitting long hours on a train or a ferry, or both. When Fenner Brockway travelled to Paris, he first took a train from London to Dover, then the ferry to Le Havre, and again the train to Paris. Once he was in a meeting, communication was not that difficult. Esperanto was not used in Bureau meetings, but there were always people who spoke at least two languages, English and French, or French and Spanish, and could interpret. The general public was informed about the Bureau, what it thought and did, via the press of its member organizations, mainly weekly publications.

Member Organizations of the London Bureau

Not more than a dozen organizations were members of the Bureau. From foundation to dissolution, the following organizations belonged to the

Bureau: the ILP (UK), the OSP and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (Revolutionair-Socialistische Arbeiderspartij, RSAP, the Netherlands), the SAP (Germany), the Bund and the Independent Socialist Labour Party (Niezależna Socjalistyczna Partia Pracy, NSPP, Poland), the SKP (Sweden), and the Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano, PSI, Italy). Until 1935, the Norwegian Labour Party (Det Norske Arbeiderpartiet, DNA) belonged to the Bureau; from 1935 onwards, the Iberian Communist Federation (Federación Comunista Ibérica, FCI) was part of the Bureau; in 1936 the POUM joined; in 1938, the PSOP and the Internationale Vereinigung der Kommunistischen Opposition (IVKO) together with the ILLA entered the Bureau. Membership of the Bureau was granted upon request, provided it had the consent of a majority of the other members.

One mass organization only belonged to the Bureau: the DNA had 87,000 members and had obtained 40 per cent of the votes in national elections in 1933. Membership figures for the other Bureau organizations are as follows: 16,732 members belonged to the ILP after its disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932; the SAP had 25,000 members in 1932, 13,000–14,000 when it started illegal work in 1933; the SKP had 13,500 members; the OSP around 7,000; the Polish Bund had 7,000 members; the NSPP had 3,500; and the PSI had 1,000 members scattered over various continents in exile; membership estimations for the POUM vary between 6,000 and 10,000. Small in comparison with socialist parties, some of the Bureau affiliates outnumbered the communist parties of their countries. The ILP had three times more members than the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), and the SKP was much bigger than the official Swedish Communist Party belonging to the Comintern.

In 1938, membership figures had gone down everywhere. The ILP was coming close to the point where due to the loss of affiliates it could no longer function as a party. The SAP, after five years of ferocious persecution, still had 2,000 members. The Sveriges Socialistiska Parti – the new name of the SKP after a split in 1936 – had 6,000 members. The RSAP, formed in 1935 through a merger of the OSP and the smaller RSP, had certainly not more than 2,000 members. In 1938, the strongest party of the Bureau was the PSOP with maybe around 10,000 members.¹¹

The Bureau's member organizations never had much election success, again with the exception of the DNA. The SAP gained no more than 0.4 per cent or 80,392 votes during the regional elections in Prussia on 24 April 1932, and

¹¹ Willy Buschak, *Das Londoner Büro. Europäische Linkssozialisten in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Amsterdam: Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, 1985), pp. 84–104, 223–8, 281–7, with more information on membership development.

0.2 per cent at the general elections on 31 July and 6 November 1932. During the 1933 general election in the Netherlands, the OSP obtained 0.75 per cent or 27,476 votes, while the RSP won 2 per cent. When splitting from socialist parties, the Bureau members apparently could not convince many workers that the split was a sane decision, and they did not manage to reverse this trend. During the UK general election in 1935, the ILP was successful only in four constituencies, all in Glasgow, and faced disaster elsewhere. In 1938, the RSAP fell to a meagre 0.8 per cent of votes in the general election.

Organizations in the Bureau's Orbit

A wide range of organizations were attracted by the conferences and congresses organized by the London Bureau, but only a few of them attended more than one congress. The Left Social Revolutionaries from Russia and the Socialist Party of America (SPA) attended the 1933 and 1938 congresses; the Jewish socialist group Hashomer Hatza'ir sent a welcome letter to the congress 1933 and was present in 1938; the Dutch Bond van Revolutionaire Socialisten (BRS), the Canadian League for a Revolutionary Workers Party (LRWP), and the Jewish socialist group Kibbutz Arzi from Palestine attended the congresses of 1936 and 1938. Thirty-seven organizations did not renew contacts with the London Bureau after having visited one of the congresses. Some of them simply ceased to exist, like the German Leninbund, or the French organization 'L'Effort Communiste', which entered the SFIO in 1934. Others had their political differences with the Bureau. The Trotskyist ILO stayed away after 1933, as the Bureau did not come out in favour of a Fourth International. Others could not get visas from their national authorities and had to stay at home, like the NSPP or the Partidul Socialist din România. The Norwegian group Mot Dag was isolated at the Paris Congress of 1935 as it supported a diplomatic alliance between France and Russia.

Regarding attendance, all the congresses the London Bureau organized between 1933 and 1938 had different features. The two conferences in Paris, in 1933 and 1935, were frequented by socialist and communist groups which had split off from the mainstream and were looking for a new orientation. Brussels in 1936 was the congress of the Spanish Revolution – the Spanish delegation, with twenty-two members, was the biggest and everybody was looking towards Spain for orientation. Eleven out of the twelve Spanish organizations were, however, POUM satellites and ceased to exist after the POUM was illegalized. Noteworthy was the strong participation of several international organizations in Brussels: the War Resisters International,

a pacifist organization that recognized the class struggle, with sections in twenty-five countries; the Rassemblement International contre la Guerre (International Assembly Against War), a body co-ordinating five other pacifist organizations; and the International Socialistische Anti-Oorlogs-Liga (International Socialist League Against War), a socialist-pacifist organization with strong roots in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Practical Politics

The London Bureau spent long hours discussing political issues, but its members were busy also with practical matters. In 1933, the London Bureau joined the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in a boycott of Nazi Germany in which no goods should be transported to or from Germany. The boycott did not find much public echo and fizzled out during the summer of 1933. A year later the Bureau organized a solidarity campaign with members of the SAP, accused of high treason due to their illegal resistance against the Nazi regime. When fascist Italy invaded Abyssinia in August 1935, the London Bureau called for a boycott of arms and munition transport to Italy. The rather successful boycott came to a brutal halt when the four ILP MPs, the so-called 'inner executive' of the party, stopped the campaign with the argument that it would create the psychological conditions for a war between Great Britain and Italy. From 1936 onwards, the Bureau organized support for the POUM. Money was collected everywhere. French Independent Socialists from the 'Gauche Révolutionnaire' (Revolutionary Left) smuggled arms and ammunition over the border. The ILP shipped medical material to Spain. Dozens of independent socialists fought in the POUM militia. When the POUM was made illegal in 1937, the Bureau sent three subsequent commissions to Spain, investigating the fate of POUM leaders and other independent socialists persecuted by Stalinist repression and moved heaven and earth to bring them out of secret prisons in Spain.

Women, Men, and Independent Socialism

The DNA was founded in 1887, the ILP in 1893, and the Bund in 1897. These parties could develop over time as their membership was balanced at least between generations, although not between the sexes. The OSP and the SAP, which split off from the social democratic mainstream in 1932, were composed mainly of young men. As youth unemployment was high during the economic slump of the 1930s, a large percentage of their

members, up to 90 per cent in the OSP, were without jobs. The high number of young unemployed men also weakened independent socialist influence in trade unions. Women had considerable influence in early German left-wing socialism, but many women preferred to stay in the old parties. Tony Sender, trade unionist and socialist MP from Dresden, was one of the spokespersons of the social democratic left wing. She condemned the foundation of the SAP, however, and stayed on in the SPD. Anna Siemsen, a well-known socialist pedagogue, was a founding member of the SAP, but left the party soon after its foundation. Women were poorly represented in its leadership. After 1933, the SAP had two centres, each of them with one female member: the national leadership in Berlin, responsible for illegal work, with Edith Baumann (imprisoned in 1934); and the foreign centre, located in Paris, directing the exile groups, with Rosi Wolfstein. Some more women had responsibilities at a lower level, like Erna Halbe in Czechoslovakia or Irmgard Enderle in Sweden, who maintained contacts with illegal groups in Germany. A similar situation could be found in the OSP: no woman in the national leadership, but a somewhat better presence of women at the local level. In Amsterdam, for example, two women and five men composed the leadership. In the PSOP, 15 per cent of the members were women, but only one woman (Suzanne Nicolitch) had a seat on the Permanent Administrative Committee of the party. The ILP had some outstanding female members, like Jennie Lee, the youngest MP between 1929 and 1931, or the writer Ethel Mannin. Its leadership, however, was as heavily dominated by men as that of any other independent socialist organization. The lack of women in the Bureau's member organizations was reflected in the weak female attendance at congresses: 3 female delegates out of 23 in 1932, all of them from Germany (Edith Baumann, Anna Siemsen, and Käthe Frankenthal); 1 (Angelica Balabanoff, PSI) out of 55 in 1933; 4 out of 150 (Rosa Balduini, PSI; Jeanne Maurín, Mika Etchebéhère, and Cecilia Rabinat, POUM) in 1936; and 3 female delegates (Jeanne Maurín, POUM, Rosi Wolfstein, SAP, and Audrey Brockway, ILP) out of 40 in 1938. Women's liberation was not debated at any of the London Bureau's congresses, it did not enter any of the congress resolutions and was hardly mentioned in the independent socialist press. Between 1933 and 1939, the *Neue Front* (*New Front*), the SAP's journal, published just one article about the social liberation of women.¹²

12 'Frauen an die Front!', *Neue Front* 6 (1937), p. 1.

Anti-Colonialism and the Bureau

While the Independent Socialists Fenner Brockway, James Maxton, and Edo Fimmen were active members of the League Against Imperialism, the ILP in 1929 still differentiated between 'developed' and 'less developed races', between people that were 'ripe' and others that were not 'ripe' to govern themselves. Political administration of countries with 'less developed races', the ILP suggested, should be transferred from national imperialist governments to the League of Nations. At the very same time, the ITF General Secretary Edo Fimmen supported the development of independent native trade unions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Henk Sneevliet did the same in Indonesia. Fenner Brockway maintained intensive contacts with Indian organizations struggling for national independence. Subhas Chandra Bose, chair of the Indian National Congress and in 1931 founder of the Congress Socialist Party, joined a meeting of independent socialists in 1931 in the Netherlands. When the London Bureau was founded in 1931, it had dispensed with any concept of 'developed' and 'less developed races' and was decidedly anti-colonial and anti-racist. Independent Socialists criticized the substitution of autochthonous economies by capitalist economy.

The Bureau's Paris Congress in 1938 showed a remarkable presence of anti-colonial liberation movements and people of colour as speakers. George Padmore from the International African Service Bureau (founded in 1937 by Padmore himself and C. L. R. James) made the opening speech about 'Imperialism and the Japanese War on China'. 'The subject peoples had little reason to have faith in the International Working-Class Movement', George Padmore told the congress in plain words. Colonial workers were disappointed with the LSI, which never accepted 'the right of self-determination for the oppressed races', but this 'was nothing to their utter disillusionment with the Communist International', which was 'openly supporting the most repressive measure of Imperialism'.¹³ Colonial workers looked on the London Bureau as the medium through which a movement could be built up linking together the working classes of the capitalist countries with the national liberation movements and particularly with the workers' and peasants' organizations in the colonial countries. Thereby the London Bureau 'would bring renewed hope and courage to the oppressed coloured races – victims of Imperialism'.¹⁴ After Padmore's speech, the congress listened to delegates from four anti-colonial organizations: the Senegal League for the

13 *A New Hope for World Socialism*, p. 28. 14 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Defence of the Blacks; the Indo-Chinese Colonial Union; the Madagascar National Liberation Society; and the Pondicherry Native Trade Unions, whose names are unfortunately not known. In its resolution about the 'Fight against Imperialism', the congress recognized without any reservations the 'right of subject peoples to national independence', and declared it imperative for the 'revolutionary socialist movement' to assist the organization of workers and peasants in unions, particularly with a view to the 'tactic of Fascist Powers in seeking to win the sympathy of the revolting subject peoples within the Empires of the satiated Imperialist Powers'.¹⁵

Apart from the decided support for all anti-colonial movements, the London Bureau did not have much in the area of foreign policy vision. Most of the Bureau members were entirely sceptical of the League of Nations and any international negotiations, be they on disarmament or tariff reduction. The League was considered a capitalist institution, international negotiations as imperialist quarrels from which revolutionary socialists should keep their distance. There was, however, a remarkable exception. The general scepticism towards the League did not extend to the International Labour Office, which was one of the League's institutions. Independent socialists active in trade unions, like the Dutch socialists Edo Fimmen and Nathan Nathans (ITF) very much appreciated the possibility of improving working conditions through ILO conventions.

Resistance against Nazism

Resistance by independent socialists against the Nazi dictatorship, which had occupied most of the European continent, continued despite the disappearance of the IRMC and IWWFAW. In the Netherlands, Henk Sneevliet and Ab Menist, both founders of the RSP and the RSAP, reorganized resistance in their Marx–Lenin–Luxemburg-Front (MLL), which published an illegal journal under the name *Spartakus* and organized, together with Dutch communists, a big strike against the Nazi persecution of Jews on 25 and 26 February 1941 in Amsterdam. At the beginning of the war, the membership of the illegal SAP was, after six years of fierce persecution, reduced to around 1,000. Local groups survived in the regions of Saxony, Brunswick, and Bremen. The POUM was reduced entirely to members in exile, with those in the south of France joining local French resistance groups. While under war conditions there was no longer any connection between illegal SAP groups and the

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 37–8.

leadership in exile was dissipated to various countries, there were some connections between the MLL and independent communist groups in Belgium. Former PSOP members were mainly active around Lyon, in a group called 'L'Insurgé' (The Rebels), which even had occasional postal contact with Marceau Pivert in Mexico and could participate in the discussion going on between independent socialists in Mexico and in Great Britain on the future of socialism.

Left Socialism or Independent Socialism?

The London Bureau and the organizations in its orbit sometimes called themselves 'left socialist', more often, however, 'revolutionary socialist' or 'independent socialist'. In the course of the 1930s, 'left socialist' as self-denomination almost disappeared, as the Bureau no longer looked upon itself as just the left wing of a bigger current, but as the nucleus of something new, truly revolutionary, and socialist. The Bureau's aim was to develop a new programmatic basis of socialism beyond social democracy and communism, as Fenner Brockway put it in 1933 at the Paris conference and Jacob Walcher in 1936 at the Brussels congress. The World Congress scheduled in 1937 for Barcelona had no lesser objective than analysing thoroughly all the working-class struggles with their successes and failures since 1918 and to erect a new architecture for socialism upon this analysis.

The potential architects had very divergent backgrounds, although they almost all referred to Marx. Some were still moving in Lenin's world of ideas, others followed Rosa Luxemburg, or were influenced by syndicalism or pacifism or Christianity. Independent socialism was not a coherent codified system; independent socialists, however, shared a couple of basic ideas. Most of the Bureau's economists, such as the German Fritz Sternberg, followed Rosa Luxemburg's theory of imperialism: the world market had become too small to absorb all available products. Non-capitalist areas that could be integrated anew into the capitalist system and extend its basis no longer existed. Capitalism could no longer be reformed or organized through plans or 'New Deals'. The breakdown of capitalism and a violent explosion of the entire system were unavoidable. 'Socialism or barbarism' was the alternative. The decisive revolutionary struggles seemed to be imminent. The working class was the only group in society capable of finding a way out of this deep crisis by capturing power through revolutionary action. Revolution, which was often equated with violence, was a matter 'between the working class and the capitalist class, between workers' power and capitalist power',

Brockway said in 1936.¹⁶ Revolution meant the conquest of power that could not be achieved by parliamentary means, although there was some debate as to the importance of parliament and democracy, with ILP veteran Fred Jowett arguing that socialist objectives could be achieved only by democratic means. Literally all Bureau members and organizations in its orbit believed that a working-class revolution was the only hope of saving mankind from barbarism. There was far less unanimity on the question of whether the working class should establish its own dictatorship after the revolution, as Lenin had always predicted. The prominent independent socialist and OSP founder P. J. Schmidt was an outspoken opponent of the concept: even the worst democracy would be better than any dictatorship, he wrote. The notion of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' appeared in documents such as the SAP's founding programme of 1933, as well as the resolution of the Bureau's Paris Congress in 1938, but there never was much reflection on what it meant.

What was different in the Bureau's concept of revolution was the role of the revolutionary party. Lenin believed that the party was the vanguard, leading the workers. The Bureau saw the revolutionary party as 'working within the mass movement'¹⁷ and as instrument of the entire working class. The Bureau also rejected Lenin's concept of democratic centralism. A revolutionary party did not need utmost discipline, but a maximum of internal democracy. The party gained its strength through incorporating all political shades of the working class, by respecting the spontaneity of the masses, and giving expression to their autonomous and direct action. Consequently, the Bureau did not conceive of the new International as a centralized body with a central institution at the top issuing the commands. The Bureau put much emphasis on the need to respect national specificities. It did not believe in one set of guidelines to be followed by everybody. 'The PSOP militant . . . does not recite from a catechism learnt by heart', as PSOP leader Marceau Pivert wrote, but acts on the basis of collectively elaborated experience.¹⁸

Independent socialism was very much preoccupied with mankind's future. Capitalism threatened the social cohesion of societies, destroyed employment, denied people a decent living and education, and threatened culture and destroyed material resources, independent socialists wrote again and again. Among all the manifestos and resolutions issued by the London

¹⁶ *A Lead to World Socialism*, p. 10. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸ 'Mémento du Socialisme Révolutionnaire', *Bulletin Intérieur du PSOP*, no. 1 (November 1938).

Bureau, there is, however, not a line dealing with nature and the environment, not to speak of climate protection, and the topic was not very prominent in the press of its member organizations either. Socialism was the Bureau's ultimate aim. Mostly, socialism was identified with public ownership. The PSOP in its founding programme in 1938 demanded the nationalization of key sectors of the economy, among them finance and energy; others, like the ILP, would have put land, mines, and transport in the first rank, but the principle of nationalization or socialization was commonly agreed. The ILP put much emphasis on industrial democracy and workers' involvement in running the nationalized economy, trying to avoid 'state socialism', while the PSOP had no difficulty in suggesting that central agencies should run the economy. Socialism, however, was, according to the Bureau's vision, not only a new economy, but a new society. It did not only mean control of the key sources of economic power, but equality among people, more liberty for the individual than capitalism could offer, and human wellbeing.

After the Bureau's Dissolution

Some independent socialists like the Germans Fritz Lewy and Eduard Weckerle (SAP), or the French Lucien Laurat, who moved on the very fringes of the London Bureau, already in the early 1930s questioned the concept of an inevitable breakdown of the capitalist system. One should not underestimate capitalism's capacity to find ways out of any crisis, they argued. A fundamental review of socialist principles, however, did not start before 1941, when remnants of the London Bureau from Spain, France, Germany, and Italy met in Mexican exile with anarchists and independent communists who had left Stalinist parties. They began a joint reflection on what had gone wrong in the labour movement since 1917. Their discussion, reflected in the review *Mundo. Socialismo y libertad* (*World: Socialism and Liberty*), profited greatly from the presence of the Belgo-French writer Victor Serge. The group around *Mundo* concluded that all classes had changed composition, function, structure, and historical role. The juxtaposition bourgeoisie–proletariat was no longer valid, and neither was the proletariat per se a revolutionary class, nor was it the only revolutionary force in society. Revolutions were not carried out by one class, but by a patchwork coalition of different societal forces. Democracy was re-evaluated completely. The widest possible political and industrial democracy for everybody, not only for workers and partisans of the revolution, was seen as the only

possibility to avoid the degeneration of revolution into the dictatorship of a bureaucratic caste. Revolution was no longer seen as a short, violent explosion, but rather as a long process, lasting over generations, in which violence was counterproductive. Socialism, individual liberty, democracy, and human dignity belonged together, as *Mundo* wrote. The journal moved away from the idea that socialism meant above all and almost solely plenty of goods to distribute. Industry would no longer be 'nationalized' but owned and governed by the communities for which it was important. That could be cities, regions, nations, or a European confederation, Marceau Pivert wrote, and he interpreted European unification as the new, third phase of socialism. During the first phase in the nineteenth century, Marxist theory was born; in the second phase, from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the mass movement appeared; the third phase would bring about a unified socialist European continent.

In spring 1946, all the former Bureau members who had survived the war and were already back from exile met in Paris. A brief overview revealed that independent socialists were giving up the existence of separate organizations and on their way back to socialist or social democratic parties. The meeting decided not to re-animate the London Bureau, but to found the 'Movement for the United States of Socialist Europe', which was later re-baptized the 'Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe' (SMUSE). During the 1950s, it was an important forerunner of European unification. Marceau Pivert was its first president, Enrique Gironella from the POUM its general secretary. Until 1960, the SMUSE organized dozens of congresses and conferences with up to 200 participants from all over Europe. As imagined by the London Bureau's Mexican exiles, socialists, pacifists, Christians, and trade unionists worked together for European unification. The concept of revolution that Victor Serge, Marceau Pivert, and others had developed in exile – revolution is a long process, stretching over decades, in which education, organization, and democracy play a central role – was adopted by many in the European labour movement, from Willy Brandt (SAP), who became the first social democratic chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, to Georges Debunne from the Belgian *Fédération Générale du Travail de la Belgique* (FGTB). The legendary chairperson of the German Metalworkers Union in the 1960s, Otto Brenner, gained his first political experience in the SAP. Max Diamant, the SAP's representative in Spain in 1936/7, directed the German metalworkers' foreign department in the 1970s and played a highly important role in supporting trade unions in Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere during the transition to democracy. Fenner Brockway was a tireless supporter of anti-colonial movements after 1945. Bob Edwards

became one of the longest-serving Labour MPs in history and as general secretary of the Chemical Workers' Union and supporter of European integration made his mark on the British and the continental labour movement. The London Bureau was a rather small, not to say tiny, organization in the 1930s, but its members and above all the concepts developed by the Bureau had huge importance after 1945.

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European Left Socialist Parties since the 1950s

KNUT KJELDSTADLI

Since the end of the First World War, when the international labour movement split into a social democratic and a communist part, socialist groups refusing to join one of the two big wings have existed. These politically 'homeless' groups may, somewhat schematically, be divided into those who described themselves as the saviours of the Bolshevik heritage and therefore considered themselves to be the true communists (Trotskyists, Maoists, etc.),¹ and those who wanted neither to follow the Bolshevik example nor to imitate the social democratic parliamentary strategy. This second, variegated current comprises the 'left socialists'. During the interwar years a part of these left socialists founded their own international partnership which became known as the London Bureau. It perished with the Second World War.²

During the first years after the Second World War attempts were occasionally made to found 'Third Way' parties again. The most important example was the Unabhängige Arbeiterpartei (UAPD, Independent Labour Party) in West Germany, inspired by Yugoslavia's dissident communism. The organization proved not to be viable and succumbed after two years (1950–2).³ Only towards the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s could new left socialist parties be established. The Dutch Pacifist Socialist Party

1 For overviews of Trotskyist and Maoist movements worldwide, see R. J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929–1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); R. J. Alexander, *International Maoism in the Developing World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999); R. J. Alexander, *Maoism in the Developed World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

2 See Willy Buschak, Chapter 23, this volume.

3 P. Kulemann, *Die Linke in Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Hanover: SOAK/ISP, 1978); S. Heimann, 'Zum Scheitern linker Sammlungsbewegungen zwischen SPD und KPD/SED nach 1945. Die Beispiele USPD und UAPD', in R. Ebbighausen and F. Tiemann (eds.), *Das Ende der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland?* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1984), pp. 301–22.

(Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij, PSP) came first in 1957. Denmark followed in 1959 with the Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti, SF), France in 1960 with the Unified Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste Unifié, PSU), and Norway in 1961 with an organization also called Sosialistisk Folkeparti (SF), in 1975 renamed Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV; Socialist Left Party). In 1964, the short-lived Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria, PSIUP) was founded; its lack of electoral success resulted in the organization's early termination in 1972.

The parties of this first 'wave' had quite divergent backgrounds. The PSP had gradually grown from a 'deliberation of the homeless', a regular meeting of Christians, pacifists, and socialists who were dissatisfied with the two older left-wing parties in parliament. The Danish SF, however, stemmed from an anguished conflict and an abrupt break: after the suppression of the Hungarian rising of 1956 and Khrushchev's revelations in the same year an oppositional wing developed within the Danish communist party. This wing was led by Aksel Larsen (the party chairperson since 1932), who was expelled in late 1958. A significant number of the members followed Larsen and shortly thereafter founded the new left socialist organization.

The PSU's prehistory is, in a sense, a combination of the prehistories of the Dutch PSP and the Danish SF; its origins lay both in politically 'homeless' groups and in splits from other parties. Three older groupings merged in the PSU: one a splinter from the social democrats; one with a background in Christian social radicalism; and one a splinter from the communists, including intellectuals such as Serge Mallet and Jean Poperen, who had left the Communist Party after the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The Norwegian SF came into being partly due to the inspiring Danish example; the organization's core consisted of intellectuals around *Orientering*, an oppositional magazine within the Social Democratic Party. Finally, the Italian PSIUP was a split-off from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI).

Although the trajectories of the first parties differed, it is striking that the founding of the first four was linked to international politics. The PSP was the initiative of peace campaigners and derived its *raison d'être* from the struggle against nuclear armament. The same applies to the Norwegian SF, which in 1961 carried the slogan: 'Domestic policy decides *how* we shall live. Foreign policy decides *whether* we shall live.' The Danish SF came about because a large group of dissident communists no longer identified with the Soviet Union. And the founding of the PSU has to be seen in connection with the French colonial war in Algeria. The establishment of the fifth party, the PSIUP, resulted from domestic politics. The organizers, including Lelio

Basso and Vittorio Foa, were dissatisfied with the close link between the PSI and Christian democracy, and preferred collaboration with the communists.⁴

Given their prioritization of international politics, the four oldest parties initially devoted less attention to topics that were traditionally seen as typically socialist: wages, prices, rents, employment, etc. Einhart Lorenz noted about the Norwegian SF that: 'During the first years neither domestic nor economics policies played a role. The primary focus was on the fields of foreign policy and questions of armament.'⁵ And Lucas van der Land observed on the basis of a poll amongst the first 100 PSP members that 94 per cent gave priority to issues 'which concern defence and what is related to it'.⁶

This initial one-sidedness explains why at first no alternatives to the domestic and economic policies of 'old socialism' were developed. Ursula Schmiederer observed, for example, that the social and economic demands of the Danish SF hardly differed from those of the other left parties.⁷ About the social and economic demands of the PSP it has been said that they were 'not very radical': 'These are demands that are also considered reasonable by the Labour Party.'⁸ Relatively speaking, the PSU was the most creative in this area: its theory of the 'new working class' (engineers, managers) that was

4 R. Gerretsen and M. van der Linden, 'Die Pazifistisch-Sozialistische Partei (PSP) der Niederlande', in Jürgen Baumgarten (ed.), *Linkssozialisten in Europa. Alternativen zu Sozialdemokratie und kommunistischen Parteien* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1982), pp. 85–106; Wetenschappelijk Bureau PSP, *Ontwapenend. De geschiedenis van 25 jaar PSP* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1982); U. Schmiederer, *Die Sozialistische Volkspartei Dänemarks. Eine Partei der neuen Linken* (Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 1969); J. Logue, *Socialism and Abundance: Radical Socialism in the Danish Welfare State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); I. Norderval Means, 'The socialist left in Norwegian politics', *Scandinavian Studies* 51, 1 (1979), pp. 25–46; G. Nania, *Un parti de la gauche, le PSU* (Paris: Gedalge, 1966); G. Nania, *Le PSU avant Rocard* (Paris: Editions Roblot, 1973); C. Hauss, *The New Left in France: The Unified Socialist Party* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978); M. Heurgon, *Histoire du PSU*, vol. 1, *La fondation et la guerre d'Algérie (1958–1962)* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994) (a second volume was never published); T. Kernalgenn, F. Prigent, G. Richard, and J. Sainclivier (eds.), *Le PSU vu d'en bas. Réseaux sociaux, mouvement politique, laboratoire d'idées (années 1950–années 1980)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010); N. Castagnez et al., *Le Parti socialiste unifié. Histoire et postérité* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013); L. Basso, 'The Italian Left', *Socialist Register* (1966), pp. 27–43; A. Agosti, *Il partito provvisorio. Storia del Psiup nel lungo Sessantotto italiano* (Rome: Laterza, 2013).

5 E. Lorenz, 'Linkssozialismus in Norwegen', in Jürgen Baumgarten (ed.), *Linkssozialisten in Europa. Alternativen zu Sozialdemokratie und kommunistischen Parteien* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1982), pp. 33–57 at p. 40.

6 L. van der Land, *Het ontstaan van de Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1962), pp. 33, 34, 41, 118.

7 Schmiederer, *Die Sozialistische Volkspartei*, pp. 48, 119.

8 Van der Land, *Het ontstaan*, p. 33.



Fig. 24.1 Meeting of the Parti Socialiste Unifié, Paris, 1960. (Photograph by Keystone-France/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images.)

growing due to industrial automation highlighted important changes in industry;⁹ still, this analysis did not lead to major programmatic renewal.

The political landscape changed in the late 1960s and 1970s in the wake of a broad radicalization of students and workers. In a single case this resulted in a left socialist split from a left socialist party: this paradoxical development took place in Denmark when a very diverse opposition in SF founded the Left Socialists (Venstresocialisterne, VS).¹⁰ More 'usual' was that opposition within left socialist parties developed Leninist tendencies and wanted to transform the mother party into a streamlined proletarian vanguard, more

⁹ In particular S. Mallet, *La nouvelle classe ouvrière* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963).

¹⁰ P. A. Madsen and J. O. Madsen, 'VS's historie – et udforsket område', *Årbog for Arbejderbevægelsens Historie* 7 (1977), pp. 176–93.

radical than the 'reformist' social democrats and communists. The PSU has seen numerous splits of this type. In Norway, a part of the SF's youth organization seceded in 1969, which resulted in 1973 in the founding of the Arbeidernes Kommunistparti (Marxist-Leninistisk) (AKP(ml), Communist Workers' Party, 1973–2007), a relatively influential Maoist organization with a still existing – but by now independent – daily *Klassekampen*, which in most regions was stronger than the 'old' Norwegian communist party. Significant sections of radicalized youth gravitated towards these new parties. This youth generation also went to smaller, but more militant Trotskyist and Maoist groups and other varieties. May 1968 was emblematic for this trend.¹¹

During the 1980s and 1990s a second wave of left socialist party-founding took place. This had two reasons. Under Deng Xiaoping, China had since 1978 begun to break with Maoist politics and became increasingly capitalist in nature. This turn disillusioned many Maoists. Moreover, the 1980s made visible the structural weakness of the Soviet Union, which culminated in the final collapse in 1991. Against this background several Maoist and communist parties transformed themselves into left socialist parties or coalitions of parties. Among the political alliances in which (former) communist parties played, or play, a major role are Izquierda Unida in Spain (United Left, since 1986); Enhedslisten in Denmark (Unity List; Red–Green Party, since 1989); the Finnish Vasemmistoliitto (Left Alliance, founded in 1990); the Portuguese Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc, since 1999); and the German Die Linke (The Left, since 2007).¹² In France, the Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français, PCF) has maintained alliances since 2009 with the Parti de Gauche (Parti of the Left), founded that same year, and with other radical left groups.¹³ In Italy, a section of the PCI supporters did not accept the party's dissolution in 1991 and created a new organization, Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation); this party gradually shifted from a dogmatic Leninist to a more left socialist orientation.¹⁴

11 See Gerd-Rainer Horn, Chapter 25, this volume.

12 In Sweden in the 1960s the communist party had already initiated drastic reforms, such as the abolition of 'democratic centralism' and critique of the Soviet Union – partly for fear that Swedish leftists would follow the Danish and Norwegian examples and found a left socialist party as well. The change became complete when the organization renamed itself in 1967 the Vänsterpartiet-Kommunisterna (VpK, Left Party-Communists).

13 Inspired by Podemos in Spain and Bernie Sanders' presidential candidacy in the United States, the Parti de Gauche in 2016 built the movement La France Insoumise. See, for example, P. Birnbaum, 'Les "gens" contre "l'oligarchie". Le discours de La France insoumise', *Cités* 72 (2017), pp. 163–73; P. Castaño, 'Populismes de gauche en Europe. Une comparaison entre Podemos et la France insoumise', *Mouvements* 96 (2018), pp. 169–80.

14 J.-Y. Dormagen, *I Comunisti. Dal PCI alla nascita di Rifondazione comunista. Una semilogica politica* (Rome: Edizioni Koinè, 1996); S. Bertolino, *Rifondazione comunista. Storia e organizzazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

Among the Maoist groups that turned to left socialism may be counted the Dutch Socialist Party (Socialistische Partij; founded in 1971), which redefined itself as left-wing social democratic during the 1990s; and the Partij van de Arbeid van België/Parti du Travail de Belgique (Belgian Workers Party; founded in 1979), which changed course in the 2000s. In 2007, the Norwegian AKP blended into the electoral alliance Rødt (Red), which received 4.7 per cent of the vote in the 2021 elections. Thus, they opened new ways towards establishing a viable radical socialist party, in addition to the secessions from either the communist or the social democratic camp, or the organization of politically 'homeless' individuals. Here I will not pay attention to small groups and limit my scope to western Europe.

The Radical Left: Is There a Core?

The literature on the individual parties is quite rich. However few studies treat these parties as parts of a greater totality. There is one ambitious effort towards a synthesis, by Luke March.¹⁵ Otherwise most important contributions can be found in anthologies with articles on the individual countries.¹⁶

Then, what is the subject? This is not self-evident. Christoph Spehr defends the thesis that 'a political basic current of democratic socialism has existed since the revolutions of the early 20th century, especially since the Russian Revolution'.¹⁷ The current is more than scattered examples, he claims; it constitutes a real unity and continuity. But, unlike their two powerful competitors, radical socialists have not created a clearly delimited and organized political tradition. If we subscribe to Spehr's view, we really have to emphasize that this current has been a unity in diversity. And although we here deal with political parties, there have been socialists who were not card-carrying members, and there have been left socialists in social democratic parties. The borders have been flowing and permeable.

¹⁵ L. March, *Radical Left Parties in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁶ Baumgarten, *Linksozialisten in Europa*; D. Sassoon (ed.), *Looking Left: European Socialism after the Cold War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997); M. Brie and C. Hildebrandt (eds.), *Parties of the Radical Left in Europe: Analysis and Perspectives* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2005); B. Daiber, C. Hildebrandt, and A. Striethorst (eds.), *From Revolution to Coalition: Radical Left Parties in Europe* (Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 2011), available at www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/5952/from-revolution-to-coalition-radical-left-parties-in-europe. On election data, see W. Nordsieck, *Parties and Elections in Europe: Parliamentary Elections and Governments since 1945: European Parliamentary Elections, Political Orientation and History of Parties* (Nordenstedt: Book on Demand, 2018).

¹⁷ C. Spehr, 'Movement, Current, Party. Forms of the Political: Consequences from Left Perspectives Today', in Brie and Hildebrandt (eds.), *Parties of the Radical Left in Europe*, pp. 36–53.

If we agree that there is a real object of study, how shall it be named? *Left* socialists is the solution chosen here, since this reflects the names of the French Parti de Gauche, the Portuguese Bloco de Esquerda (from 1999), the German Die Linke, the Swedish Vänsterpartiet, the Finnish Vasemmistoliitto, the Norwegian Sosialistisk Venstreparti, and the Icelandic Vinstrihreyfingin (from 1999) – they all call themselves ‘Left’. This label dates back to a political current in the interwar years, which was neither communist nor mainstream social democratic, such as the Austromarxists of Austria, the Jewish Bund, Italian ‘Maximalists’, and the British Independent Labour Party.

Radical socialists would be another suitable name. The *radical* left differs from the *extreme* left. The radical left does not use violence as a political tool. It abides by democratic rules. If it has spoken about alternatives to liberal parliamentary democracy, this is not based on an anti-democratic stance. The preferred alternative has been a more vigorous participatory democracy. When it comes to economic issues, Luke March says, left socialist parties are:

radical first in that they reject the underlying socio-economic structure of contemporary capitalism and its values and practices (ranging, depending on party, from rejection of consumerism and neo-liberalism to outright opposition to private property and capitalistic profit incentives). Second, they advocate alternative economic and power structures involving a major redistribution of resources from existing political elites.¹⁸

Political Programme

Is there a common political denominator for these parties? As the Cold War background explains, they argued for disarmament, in particular the abolition of nuclear weapons, for neutrality and non-alignment, and for the strengthening of international organizations such as the United Nations. Some originated from an anti-militaristic or even pacifist tradition. They have claimed independence both from the United States and NATO and from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Some have seen themselves as bridge-builders between East and West. Yet it may be claimed that many radical socialists were more critical of American imperialism than of Soviet Russian policies, at least until the invasion of Hungary in 1956.

In the domestic sphere they have been socialists since they demanded public ownership of the national infrastructure and of the commanding

¹⁸ March, *Radical Left Parties*, p. 8.

heights of the economy such as banks and heavy industry. So, there is an anti-capitalist strand in these parties. And correspondingly there is a wish to strengthen working-class positions. Their economic policy is reminiscent of the classical social democrats from the Second International – gradualist, reformist, parliamentary, and legalist – but in favour of public ownership. Some parties also had a special ‘brand’, such as the idea about workers’ *autogestion*, self-government, for a while nurtured by the French Parti Socialiste Unifié.

In their social policy programmes – within capitalism – they were a prime mover and protector of the welfare state. In these matters they were a more or less radical variety of the social democrats. In other political fields they often represented a modernist, culturally radical stance, such as when they defended the right of abortion. If not before, issues concerning reproductive rights and gender equality were established more firmly at the centre of the parties’ agenda as feminists joined in greater numbers from the 1970s onwards.

Left socialists have obviously had an imprint from the general societal and party political situation in their formative years. They had to relate to already existing ‘families’ of parties. The north European ‘classic’ social democratic parties were concerned with the distribution of wealth. The south European parties were concerned with modernizing and not disbanding capitalism, and securing a transition from dictatorship to democracy. After 1989, one may add the parties of the former so-called socialist camp of eastern and central Europe with their state socialism, and more egalitarian than libertarian in their ideals.

Such national peculiarities could even be observed when parties seemed quite similar. There were differences due to their situations of origin. The Nordic parties may serve as examples: the Danish Socialistisk Folkeparti was, as mentioned, formed in 1959 by a secession from the Communist Party. The Swedish Vänsterpartiet-Kommunisterna was a traditional communist party that was taken over by reformers. A similar development took place in Finland. The Norwegian Socialistisk Folkeparti in 1961 was primarily recruited from Labour Party members and new, previously unorganized people. In 1975, it merged with radical social democrats, some communists, and the non-organized to found the Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Socialist Left Party). In a similar way several splinter groups have left the French Socialist Party, such as the Mouvement Républicain et Citoyen (Citizen and Republican Movement) in 1993 and the Parti de Gauche (Left Party) in 2009, which developed into La France Insoumise (Untamed France) in 2016.

Radical socialist parties were not immune to broader socio-political currents. One example, the Danish Socialistisk Folkeparti, began in 1959 as a classical socialist party. But by and by its programme became more liberal or moderate. A new programme declared that, although critical of the United States, the party recognized that force may have to be used in international relations. At the outset it had been against Danish membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). Later, it was sceptical of further integration, and opposed the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. However, from 1999 it began to favour membership of the European Union.¹⁹ In 2004, two-thirds of party members backed a draft for an EU constitution. In 2011, an observer noted that SF may no longer be classified as 'radical left'; it no longer has transformative ambitions.²⁰

There is nothing self-evident in the emergence of left socialist parties. Such parties have been absent in several important European countries. The explanation must be found in the separate national histories. In Great Britain, for example, Labour has had a tradition as a conglomerate party: from 1906 to 1932 it harboured the radical-pacifist Independent Labour Party as an organized faction. This historical precedent has made the idea of a party-in-the-party palatable. From time to time groups such as Trotskyists have practised 'entrism', that is, they joined Labour and tried to influence it from within. So, in Great Britain there have sometimes been more radical socialists within the Labour Party than outside. According to Thomas Kachel, critics of Labour stayed in the party because 'Labour remains the centre ground of the struggle to bring left-wing ideas and ideals into British politics.'²¹ Members who in other countries might have chosen to join a left socialist party were deterred from this also by the British election system. First-past-the-post voting made it difficult for a radical opposition to win representation. So radical opposition groups worked through bodies such as the Labour Representation Committee and the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, among them the party leader from 2015, Jeremy Corbyn.

19 D. A. Christensen, 'Foreign policy objectives: left socialist opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 21, 1 (1998), pp. 51–70; March, *Radical Left Parties*, p. 103.

20 I. V. Johansen, 'The Left and Radical Left in Denmark', in Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst (eds.), *From Revolution to Coalition*, pp. 10–25 at p. 16.

21 T. Kachel, 'The British Left at the End of the New Labour Era: An Electoral Analysis', in Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst (eds.), *From Revolution to Coalition*, pp. 78–92 at p. 82.

In Spain, the debate within the left before 1975 was primarily concerned with the fight against the Francoist dictatorship. Much of this debate took place within and between various factions of the Spanish Socialist Party.²² Only in 1986 was a new alliance formed, *Izquierda Unida*, as mentioned with the Communist Party as a core, but also with various socialist member organizations.

In West Germany, the general political climate with its strong anti-communistic sentiment did not leave much space for left socialism. The student revolt of the 1960s and early 1970s called forth several small groups, some 'party-building', but with little weight on the national scene. The so-called '5 per cent clause' in parliamentary elections acted as a bar against small, radical parties. After *die Wende* members of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany, i.e., the East German Communist Party) reorganized themselves in 1990 as the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS, Party of Democratic Socialism). In 2007, the PDS merged with a socialist and trade unionist group with western origin, the Wahlalternative Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit (WASG). Together they established Die Linke (The Left), a party aspiring to be a 'party of the movements'.

Parties and Governments: Influence or Integration?

Left socialists have repeatedly been faced with a dilemma that is general in politics, a structurally given fact, namely, principles versus pragmatism, clear lines versus compromises. In the German Green Party the competing factions were dubbed *Realos* and *Fundis*, realists and fundamentalists. This dichotomy was perhaps even more pressing for leftists as they have had a most ambitious goal, another society. For left socialists the question was how far should they back 'the least evil', co-operate with social democrats, and thus lock out bourgeois parties?

Varying ideas about participation in government have been linked to varying evaluations of the basic character of the two competing big currents, particularly the social democrats. Are they a part of the problem or of the solution? Is it meaningful to speak of a 'left' at all? Or have party leaders such as Bettino Craxi in the Italian Socialist Party become a supporting pillar of bourgeois society? The answers led to different strategies: some in the

22 R. Gillespie, *The Spanish Socialist Party: A History of Factionalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

French Parti Socialiste Unifié believed in the possibility of merging the old parties. Others found that the PSU should be the nucleus of a unified radical left.²³ Disagreement in the Danish Socialist People's Party on the backing of the so-called 'red cabinet' with a social democratic and SF parliamentary majority led to a split and the foundation of a new party in 1967, the Venstresocialisterne (Left Socialists). After years of internal strife – in 1970 this party had eight organized and registered factions – it was in 1989 reorganized as Enhedslisten.²⁴

Arguments concerning participating in or backing governments have been launched both pro and contra co-operation. Stefan Sjöberg summarizes the reasoning of the Swedish party in the early 2000s:

The present Left Party pro standpoint is as follows: 'We have to cooperate and compromise with the SAP government, because if we do not, others – that means bourgeois parties – will. And that would result in an even worse situation. Therefore we must try to push the SAP policy as far "to the left" as possible, without breaking the cooperation.'²⁵

The dilemma becomes more acute if co-operation also includes active government participation. Should radical socialists as a minority enter a coalition led by a stronger party, most often social democrats? By and by several have wandered 'from revolution to coalition'. Let the Nordic parties furnish examples. In 1966, the Danish Socialist People's Party backed a social democratic minority government, producing a majority, a constellation which came to be called 'the workers' majority' or even 'the red cabinet'. The answer has been yes to participation in the case of Finland, first from 1995 to 2003, when Vasemmistoliitto participated in the so-called 'rainbow government' along with bourgeois parties, and then again some years later.²⁶ In Norway the Socialist Left Party participated in the red-green government from 2005 to 2013 with social democrats and agrarians as partners. The leftist green Icelanders of Vinstrihreyfingin – Grænt Framboð (Left Green

23 J. Kergoat, 'Die Parti Socialiste Unifié in Frankreich', in Baumgarten (ed.), *Linkssozialisten in Europa*, pp. 107–29 at p. 118.

24 B. Lund, 'Sozialistische Volkspartei (SF) und Linkssozialisten (VS). Dänische Parteien zwischen Sozialpartnerschaft und Klassenkampf', *ibid.*, pp. 58–84 at p. 71.

25 S. Sjöberg, 'The Swedish Left Party in Europe: Towards a Strategy for Economic Democracy together with Social Democracy', in Brie and Hildebrandt (eds.), *Parties of the Radical Left in Europe*, p. 124.

26 A. Kontula and T. Kuhanen, 'Rebuilding the Left Alliance: Hoping for a New Beginning', in Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst (eds.), *From Revolution to Coalition*, p. 26.

Movement, founded in 1999) formed a coalition government in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2009.²⁷ And, in 2006, Vänsterpartiet in Sweden struck a formal deal to support the social democratic minority government.

The supporters of engagement argue that participation gives power: one gets things done through participation, more results than in previous decades of opposition. Another argument is that political allies want the left socialists to join, not to abstain. For instance, trade unions expect the socialists to put forward their demands. Among radical party leaders who have spent a long period in opposition, one may see a kind of impatience, a wish to make their mark or even raise a monument to their achievements in politics.

Counter-arguments have been several: moderate social democrats have in the 2010s been responsible for austerity measures, targeted more at ordinary people than the well-to-do. Joining a coalition with social democrats makes radical socialists responsible for this policy. The voters then see few differences between these parties. The fate of the Greek SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), established in 2012, is telling. Unable to resist the demands from the European Union and capitalist financial institutions they had to cut the social budget and were severely punished by the voters.

There is a gap between left socialist ideas and ideals and government policies. In such situations of cognitive dissonance, one tends to adjust the original ideas. The compromises eventually become the policy of the party. Limited victories may be interpreted as epochal victories. So the party is 'tamed' – government participation may carry the seed of opportunism. Such a swing may also frustrate old allies, such as the social movements. Another answer is defence. As Rob Gerretsen and Marcel van der Linden say about the Dutch Pacifist Socialist Party: 'Parts of the party did not want to participate in state administration at all, others saw no difference between the PvdA (social democrats) and the bourgeois parties.'²⁸

In order to deter this kind of development, some left socialists have tried to formulate conditions that must be reached before entering a government: (i) a clear and convincing party programme; (ii) an acceptable platform for the coalition government; (iii) a reasonably strong backing from voters; (iv) critical support from movements, milieux, and research institutions. If these conditions were met, they might produce a counter-weight to the integration into

27 A. L. Erlingsdóttir, 'The Left in Iceland', *ibid.*, pp. 41–9.

28 Gerretsen and van der Linden, 'Die Pazifistisch-Sozialistische Partei', p. 93.

the political system. The alternative to this conditional participation is to offer critical support, making it clear that a centrist, social democratic government could not expect backing under all circumstances. The problem is that overthrowing such a government also has its price. When Rifondazione Comunista voted to topple the moderate left and technocratic Prodi government in 1998 they lost support.

Parties and Movements

Much classical socialist theory on organizing has promoted two ideas. First, there is the idea of a division of labour between the party and the trade unions. The unions take care of the daily struggle, the interests of workers in capitalist society. The party represents the wider political and societal programme. Through parliamentary elections it will win the majority, gradually, within the existing legal framework or by changing the laws. Secondly, the leadership rests with the party. It may also be the 'family head', with organizations for women, youth, children, athletes, choirs, etc., like satellites around the sun.

A similar idea about leadership informs the communists. They also think of a leading elite party. They differ in the road to be taken, though, claiming it has to be through a revolution. The left socialists may also have similar notions about leadership. But this has seldom de facto been the case. A party such as the Parti Socialiste Unifié in France was not at all prepared for May 1968. Many PSU militants participated in the student revolt, but the party did not play any leading role.²⁹ Such experiences led many, particularly after the collapse of communist states in 1989, to develop an alternative party theory. According to this alternative view, the role of the party is no longer to enlighten 'backward' masses; parties can rarely claim any supremacy. The idea that a party had its 'own' popular or social movement became obsolete. Likewise, the mental image of the party as a general staff leading a proletarian army had to be abandoned. On the other hand, there were also tendencies towards neglecting any role at all for the party, making a fetish of grassroots work and 'actions', ignoring more coherent theoretical and strategic reflections.

Instead, a new 'model of a party' was developed: the main task of the party is to be *connective*.³⁰ The social formation is a conglomerate, a mixture of

²⁹ Kergoat, 'Die Parti Socialiste Unifié', p. 115.

³⁰ M. Porcaro, 'The Third Actor: The Moderate Left, Radical Left and the "New Global" Movement', in Brie and Hildebrandt (eds.), *Parties of the Radical Left in Europe*, p. 62.

modes of production. This produces a heterogeneous social base among members and electorate. Thus, the task of the party is to unite various social groups and class factions. It should develop links between militants from various conflict zones and social movements. In this way tensions and contradictions may be met, and it is hoped that they can be overcome. Furthermore, the party should combine parliamentary and extra-parliamentary efforts. The function of the party has finally been seen as 'an institutional backbone' for the broader left movement.³¹ It provides protection and latitude to other forms of leftist activities.

The movements cover three tasks vis-à-vis the parties: they may offer insights and help to formulate programmes within their particular field; they may lend force to extra-parliamentary mobilization around current political questions; and, vice versa, they may 'monitor' the activities of the party, in particular, if the party participates in a coalition government, a situation where adaptation and even opportunism may thrive. Some researchers claim that ties between parties and movements, between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary efforts, tend to weaken over time.³²

Now, claiming to be 'a movement party' is not a cure for all, a remedy that meets all challenges. There are contradictions among movements in style and content. Some are reminiscent of benevolent associations, centres for a local mutualist barter economy or social work for clients. These associations differ from social movements proper, in that the latter are characterized by mobilizing against some opponent or enemy. Theories on such contentious social movements often emphasize – too much – the differences between the 'old' popular movements, such as trade unions, and the 'new' social movements such as feminist movements. The 'old' are depicted as working class at their base, materialist in orientation, and bureaucratic–hierarchical in organization. The 'new' are seen as either middle class or of unclear class nature at their base, idealist/existential in orientation, and egalitarian in organizational type. Even if these distinctions are too hard drawn – there is plenty of idealism in many unions – there is some truth in them. So the party must steer, for instance, between environmentalists and trade unionists. Just claiming to be a red–green party does not make the contradictions evaporate. An indicator of these tensions may be seen in a party's choice of group membership in the EU Parliament. The Danish Socialist People's Party has oscillated between the

31 C. Spehr, 'Movement, Current, Party: Forms of the Political: Consequences from Left Perspectives Today', *ibid.*, p. 42.

32 Sjöberg, 'Swedish Left Party in Europe', p. 175.

green and the radical socialist group, in 2004 leaving the European United Left to join the Greens.

Sometimes these dichotomies are linked to a distinction between movements working within a national frame and those working on a global level. Globalization has created new areas for movements. Also for socialist parties this offers possibilities. The parties then have to work in new ways in terms of organization and politics, a difficult task as traditional parties are 'statist' and have been used to favouring the party as a primary tool. So, parties with other concepts have emerged, such as the Spanish Podemos from 2014.

There are also national varieties. While, for instance, French feminist organizations have tended to be esoteric networks around a strong mother figure, a matriarch, the Norwegian movement is similar to the classical organizations – with formal procedures, local branches, conventions, etc. The French movement has kept its distance from political parties, while many feminist militants in Norway were also party members.

Social Base: No Longer Class Parties?

The radical left and non-communist parties that were founded in the decades since the 1950s were started during the huge upswing of industrial capitalism. There was a rapidly growing industrial working class. And although communists, and to a large extent also social democrats, mostly attracted workers, there were, so to speak, so many workers that there was also an opening for the left radicals. In several countries these new parties were, as mentioned above, founded partly by splinter factions from the old ones, factions that partly consisted of trade unionists. Yet the prototypical members in the new parties did not come from a consolidated radical socio-political environment. They were recruited more on the basis of the individuals' political point of view, less on participation in a tightly knit milieu. The dominant current in the Dutch Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij was ethical pacifism, an idealist socialism keeping a distance from unionists.³³

Yet these parties had a solid working-class base both as members and as voters.³⁴ However, there were also other categories. Primarily these were wage earners who were not manual workers, having a secondary or higher education. Quite a few were students. This *new left* was typically backed by the professions of the welfare state, teachers, nurses, social workers, and

33 Wetenschappelijk Bureau PSP, *Ontwapenend*; Gerretsen and van der Linden, 'Die Pazifistisch-Sozialistische Partei', p. 90.

34 Lund, 'Sozialistische Volkspartei (SF) und Linksozialisten (VS)', p. 75.

other public employees. To some degree the left parties also reached women who formally were unskilled, such as cleaners. This switch meant that more women flocked around these parties and influenced their policies. In several parties women came to constitute the majority both as members and as followers. The Norwegian Sosialistisk Venstreparti drew twice as many women as men in the 2005 election.³⁵ This turned out to be an Achilles' heel for the trade union movement. The industrial workers became fewer, and they were not replaced by members in the service sector. The anti-capitalist message of radical parties did not help to promote recruitment of employees in this private sector.

Realizing that their social base was composite, several of these parties from the 1950s and 1960s conceived themselves as 'people's parties' or 'popular parties', not 'proletarian' or 'workers' parties. From an ultra-left position this seemed opportunistic, a swing to the right. Others said that this extended social base mirrored the actual situation. This multiformity was an asset, yet also presented challenges as different cultural styles met in the party.

In the 1970s, these parties experienced an influx of a 'new new left', the second wave of left socialists, 'the generation of May 1968'. The new members were young, many were school pupils or students – sometimes involved in several movements at the same time. So, generation and class were intertwined. Some participated in 'old style' popular movements such as the trade unions, but more typically in new militant social movements, such as solidarity with struggles in the Global South. Several parties – among them Rifondazione, Die Linke, and the Socialist Left Party – dubbed themselves the 'party of movements'.

Linked to the various social bases is also the choice of political profile: should one fight for material, here-and-now interests, and/or promote more general values or ideas? This division should not be seen as clear-cut; it is more a question of the centre of gravity.

After the culmination of industrial capitalism in the 1970s, and the subsequent information and service capitalism, the classical 'standard worker', the male manual worker, full time, and relatively stably employed, was no longer the statistical norm. They formed one section in a broader block of subalterns. In addition there were sections of the new social middle strata who were relatively successful in the information capitalism. On the other hand, there were service workers with lower qualifications, sometime identified as

35 D. Seierstad, 'The Left in Norway: Politics in a Centre-Left Government', in Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst (eds.), *From Revolution to Coalition*, pp. 50–64 at p. 58.

a 'precariat', the class with temporary and insecure employment. Finally, there was an underclass, that was outside the formal economy, or living as 'working poor', having a wage so low that they could not subsist on this income. There are radical parties that managed to be accessible for unemployed and other socially deprived people.

Whether these four factions – the working class, social middle strata, service workers, and precariat – will be able to form some kind of alliance has been and will be a most pertinent question for labour movements. It is particularly urgent for the left wing. How does one obtain an 'alliance of social forces' within the party?³⁶ A prototypical example of such a conglomerate party has been the Italian Rifondazione Comunista (founded in 1991) that:

rapidly became a focus for rank and file militants, some workers' groups in large industries and some members of the 'red' sub-culture in central Italy who wanted to preserve an intransigent class politics and a 'proletarian internationalism' (of which Cuba was the rallying point). The new party also attracted the extra-parliamentary Left, including Trotskyist groups, and above all, the old socialist left of the ex-PSIUP, the party which in 1964 had split from the PSI in protest against socialist participation and which had joined the PCI in the 1970s after disastrous electoral results.³⁷

Such traditional composite working-class milieux were complemented by various immigrant groups. Most immigrants belonged to the working class and became a part of the shift from industrial to service capitalism. Several of the first generation born in the new country experienced upward social mobility into the new middle strata due to education. Others were recruited into the service proletariat and the precariat. As voters, migrants usually favoured social democratic or left socialist parties. To recruit them as members proved to be more difficult – but not impossible, if there was a will to change elements in party culture. The real challenge was that ideologically socialists were anti-racists and internationalists, arguing for equality, while, on the other hand, unregulated migration put pressure on wages and work conditions, producing radical right-wing attitudes. All left socialist parties grappled with this contradiction without finding any definite answer.

³⁶ Spehr, 'Movement, Current, Party', p. 53.

³⁷ G. Sapelli, 'The Italian Left after 1989: Continuity and Transformation', in Sassoon (ed.), *Looking Left*, pp. 44–63 at pp. 54–5.

Internationalism: After the Second World War

Internationalism returned after the Second World War as an answer to the Cold War. The 'third point of view' insisted that there was a way between East and West, that independence from both blocks was a feasible course. By and by this East–West axis was supplemented or even supplanted by a North–South axis. Coming to anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and support for liberation movements the left socialists did not waver. French radical socialists were clear supporters of the national liberation movement in the Algerian War, and denounced the right-wing socialist Prime Minister Guy Mollet.³⁸ Dutch left socialists spoke out against the remnants of Dutch colonialism. And socialists in countries without previous colonies also offered support, as in the case of Vietnam and the Portuguese possessions.

The most important field for the parties' international relations has nevertheless been the European Union. The EU question has probably been one of the most divisive among the European radical left. In their stance towards the EU several parties have been critical, or even outright hostile. Others have deemed the chances for progressive politics relatively good. Many parties were split between 'traditionalists' and 'pro-integrationists'. The latter have seen the EU as a battlefield where struggles might take place. The former argue that liberalism is inherent in the very foundation of the EU, in the 'four freedoms'. This is also the stance of the Norwegian Sosialistisk Venstreparti. It criticizes the EU for being undemocratic and bureaucratic, an analysis shared with a huge majority of Norwegians and a main reason why Norway abstains from membership.

When the EU was established, few chose to abstain fully from participation. Critics ran for seats in the European Parliament too. In order to work in the EU institutions there was a need for co-ordination between parties belonging to the same 'family'. In 1991, a New European Left Forum was founded. In 1994, there was a merger between the United European Left and Left Unity, named the Confederal Group of the European United Left (Gauche Unitaire Européenne, GUE). In 1995, the Nordic Green Left (NGL) was included, and insisted on emphasizing the green dimension. Hence, the acronym GUE–NGL. Around 2000, there were three categories of members: old style communists,

38 M. Le Tallec, 'L'unité d'action des trotskystes, anarchistes et socialistes de gauche autour de l'anticolonialisme et de l'anti-bonapartisme (1954–1958)', *Diacronie: Studi di Storia Contemporanea* 9, 1 (2012), available at <http://journals.openedition.org/diacronie/3077>, last accessed 15 January 2021.

reformed communists, and hybrid parties.³⁹ The best result at European Parliament elections for GUE–NGL has been 11.1 per cent in 1979, the poorest 4.8 per cent in 2009.

One could imagine that a democratic left socialism might appeal to the populations of eastern Europe, as the German Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus had done. But the post-communist parties in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia reinvented themselves as social democrats, arguing for a market economy, a welfare state, and EU and NATO memberships.

The parties operating in the EU felt a need for closer co-operation. The argument was that if opponents such as capital and EU bureaucracy and the global market economy worked in a more integrated way, the left had to find an answer on the same organizational level. Many challenges could not be solved within the frame of the nation-state. Therefore, in 2004, a Party of the European Left was founded. According to the programmatic proposal at the founding congress: 'The consolidation of the EU creates a new political space for class struggle and for the defence of the interests of workers and democracy.' They declared that this was not a supranational organization like the old Communist Third International disbanded in 1943. It should rather be a federation of independent parties. There was to be internal democracy, anti-Stalinism, and autonomy in national politics. Even with these reservations not all members of GUE–NGL felt ready to join such a close union. At the start there were sixteen member parties and ten observer parties. The number has grown since. Not all these members are political heavyweights. The challenge for such a party is to become a real functioning unit at the grassroots level. Secretarial work and manifestos have their use – and also their limitations.

Why Has Left Socialism Remained Relatively Weak?

From one point of view left socialism might seem to fill a political vacuum (at least in western Europe), offering the best of two traditions: the communist insistence on class issues, social equality, and justice; and the social democratic commitment to political democracy. However, this strand of socialism has been relatively weak compared with social democratic parties and modest also in comparison with strong communist parties such as the French PCF and the Italian PCI. One example, the Dutch Pacifistisch-Socialistisch Partij,

39 A. Volkens, *Policy Positions of Left Parties in the 1999–2004 European Parliament: Programmatic Similarities and Differences* (Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 2004).

had 5 per cent as its peak performance in parliamentary elections, not a very impressive number.⁴⁰ There are some examples of electoral successes, such as the Finnish Vasemmistoliitto in 1979 (17.9 per cent); the Danish Socialistisk Folkeparti in 1987 (14.6 per cent) and 2009 (15.9 per cent); the Dutch Socialistische Partij in 2006 (16.6 per cent); Spanish Podemos in 2016 (22.6 per cent); and in the French presidential election of 2017, the candidate for the left movement La France Insoumise, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, achieved 19.58 per cent. But transforming such scattered successes into sustained forceful political blocs has proven difficult. Ten per cent has been a decent result, 20 per cent almost the maximum.

This raises the question: why are these parties so weak? One may point to the obvious – small parties carry decline less well than big ones. This, however, only shifts the question – why did they remain small? And more particularly: why did they remain relatively weak in comparison with social democracy? Even in those cases in which voters swung away from social democrats such as the Greek PASOK in 2015 and the French Parti Socialiste in 2017, they often found right-wing populists or even far-right groups more attractive than left socialists.

A part of the explanation may be external. In the first place, the two formidable opponents limited the available political space. The competitors tried to associate the left socialists with the enemy side. Social democrats accused left socialists of being crypto-communists, Moscow followers in disguise. This happened to the Norwegian Sosialistisk Venstreparti in the election campaign in 2005. And as late as the Swedish parliamentary election of 2018, the right side tried to draw the communist card to smear Vänsterpartiet, with its communist historical roots. On the other hand, communists sometimes argued that the left socialists were not really anti-capitalists. The Norwegian Sosialistisk Venstreparti adopted, as we have seen, the slogan of ‘the third point of view’. The communists therefore claimed that the SF propagated a mix of socialism and capitalism. Left socialist parties often had to sail between Scylla and Charybdis.

Some electoral systems are another external impediment. The British first-past-the-post system favours the dominant parties. The post-Franco system in Spain works in favour of parties with a concentrated regional support – most felt in the Basque country and Catalonia, but also in districts such as Aragón and Valencia. The system works against parties with a fairly even distribution of support, such as Izquierda Unida. And the German 5 per cent threshold

40 Gerretsen and van der Linden, ‘Die Pazifistisch-Sozialistische Partei’, p. 82.

rule for representation in the Bundestag excludes smaller parties. However, one may ask, why did socialists not obtain more? Five per cent is modest.

A final persistent trait is that in some countries affiliations to other social units than class may override loyalty to the labour movement, be it region, language/ethnicity, or religion. This may pertain, for instance, to Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, and Ireland. A counter-argument is that also bourgeois and moderate parties are likewise affected. A possible retort may be that the left is more vulnerable, as the radical energy on which it depends is tapped by these other loyalties. Sinn Féin in Ireland has filled a place that otherwise might have been occupied by socialists.

The conclusion seems to be that external impediments are present, but cannot offer a complete explanation. So let us turn to interior traits.

An obvious challenge is that the organized left socialists never were a homogeneous bloc, a fact seen both in the days of the London Bureau and in the epoch after the Second World War. Thus, the German Die Linke is described as a multiform party with several dimensions:

They facilitated the coexistence of divergent political and organisational perspectives, diverse political styles, a multitude of political cultures, and cultural codes which had emerged in the course of concrete experience and theoretical discussions. Specifically, this meant the coexistence of authoritarian, welfare-state-oriented, communist, Trotskyite, left-wing socialist and reformist-libertarian groupings. They describe their party as anti-capitalist or critical of capitalism, as a party opposed to capitalism, neo-liberalism or a neo-liberal-orientated social democracy; as a party defending the welfare state; or a party that is critical of the system and wishes to draw on the emancipatory potential of bourgeois society.⁴¹

Such multiformity easily leads to conflicts. So, a second problem has been infighting within the left. Old conflicts persisted – such as on the relevance of Trotsky's legacy. And new conflicts arose – such as the question of joining a government in a minority position. Such a divided house has trouble standing; internal party struggles seldom appeal to prospective voters.

These differences may be seen as a product of tensions within the social base. Most of these parties still claim they are, if not working-class parties, then wage-earners' parties. Recruitment in recent decades has, as seen, brought new social elements, young middle-class members. This has

41 C. Hildebrandt, 'The Left Party in Germany', in Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst (eds.), *From Revolution to Coalition*, pp. 93–113 at p. 106.

produced conflicts over cultural style, leading to estrangement from the old guard. And there have been clashes of interests – such as the following dilemma: how does one combine a viable economy securing jobs with the huge necessary turnaround to secure life on the planet?

So, despite some plausible socio-historical explanations, we have to arrive at a political conclusion: the limited success is due to the lack of convincing party programmes. Potential voters may disagree with proposals because these are thought to be against the interests of ordinary people. Or potential voters may sympathize with the proposals, but do not believe in the left socialists' capacity to carry them through.

This is not primarily due to accidental shortcomings from the socialists, weak leaders, or tactical blunders. It mirrors a deep real dilemma: if you want to change society radically, even making another society, how do you simultaneously launch a viable and credible alternative for the present day? Is it possible to be a revolutionary in a non-revolutionary situation?⁴²

I have tried to explain the more or less permanent minority position of left socialists. Maybe the question could be rephrased as follows: 'Under what conditions do radical leftist parties compete successfully in the political spectra in their countries?'⁴³ The answer may be that successes come in situations where there is a window of opportunity. This consists of two elements: first, the establishment shows fissures, cracks, and instabilities; and, secondly, the radical left uses this opening in an offensive where party politics and mass mobilizations from below join hands. This has not led to the promised land. But such political conjunctures have contributed to changes in power relations within bourgeois society – for labour contra capital, for democratically elected bodies against the market, for a more humane variety of capitalism. There is still room for and need for left socialism.

Further Reading

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Chiocchetti, Paolo, *The Radical Left Party Family in Western Europe, 1989–2015* (London: Routledge, 2016).

42 March, *Radical Left Parties in Europe*, p. 11.

43 Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst (eds.), *Radical Left Parties in Europe*, p. 8. See also P. Chiocchetti, *The Radical Left Party Family in Western Europe, 1989–2015* (London: Routledge, 2017); Y. Katsourides, *Radical Left Parties in Government: The Cases of SYRIZA and AKEL* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

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The New Left as a Global Current since the Late 1950s

GERD-RAINER HORN

The Catalyst of 1956

In the wake of the 1917 October Revolution and the First World War, when the Third (Communist) International got off the ground, the socialist movement underwent its first major split since becoming a mass movement in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The second significant rupture occurred about forty years later, affecting both Second International socialism and Third International communism. In the mid- to late 1950s, an international New Left suddenly emerged that captured the attention and imagination of several generations of activists, though it never came to the founding of a new international association that could have given added structure to the heterogeneous forces of this New or Radical Left, which dissipated as an internationally relevant force in the course of the 1970s and 1980s.

Several formative historical events played crucial roles in the crystallization of a New Left in western Europe, where the term 'New Left' first became common currency; and the ruse of history managed to concentrate such moments of crisis and opportunity within four short months of the calendar year of 1956. On 28 June 1956, massive protests by workers in Poznań, taking the form of strikes and street demonstrations demanding improvements in working conditions, erupted in this fifth-largest city in Poland, crushed by brutal repression within days, with 54 dead and roughly 600 injured.¹ On 26 July, in a speech in Alexandria, Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt, announced the immediate nationalization of the Suez Canal, heightening tensions over Middle East policy, and leading to the Israeli invasion of Egypt from 29 October 1956 onwards, with military and diplomatic assistance from

1 P. Machcewicz, *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Great Britain and France.² The hottest phase of the Algerian Revolution, the battle of Algiers, began on 30 September 1956. Though this urban uprising was eventually defeated in the course of 1957, it helped to pave the way to the eventual independence of Algeria on 3 July 1962.³ Last, but not least, six days before the Israeli Army invaded Egypt, on 23 October 1956, the Hungarian uprising against Stalinist oppression entered its hot phase, which was met by Soviet military invasion beginning on 4 November 1956, leading to 2,500 Hungarians and Soviet troops killed, and a first wave of 200,000 Hungarians fleeing to the West.⁴

The ferocious repression of the Algerian Revolution and the British and French alliance with Israel against Egyptian nationalism were single-handedly responsible for the qualitative increase in critical voices amongst west European socialists, who had called the French and British sections of the Socialist International up to this moment their ideological lodestar and institutional home. The Stalinist repression of the Poznań and (even more so) the Hungarian revolts resulted in a similar increase in voices clamouring for fundamental changes within the orbit of the Communist International. For much of the 1950s and into the 1960s, the gradually emerging New Left thus drew most of its energies from milieux that had hitherto been organized within the ranks of the Old Left, the latter concept usually denoting Second International socialism and Third International communism. The New Left stood in a quasi-organic line of continuity – to be sure, having carried out important ruptures in the process – with what had come before.

Other pre-existing political traditions also often played key roles in the genesis of a New Left in the wake of 1956. One of the oldest dissident communist currents, Trotskyism, performed crucial roles in, for instance, the genesis of the West German New Left, when its quantitatively minuscule membership had entered the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in 1953 in pursuit of an internationally co-ordinated tactic of ‘entryism’ within the organizations of the majoritarian Old Left.⁵ Likewise, already from 1951 onwards, Belgian Trotskyists performed entrust work within the structures of

2 K. Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), is an informative entry point into the intricacies of this conflict.

3 B. Stora, *Histoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993), remains a solid survey of this traumatic conflict.

4 Still amongst the best accounts of the Hungarian revolt in English are P. Fryer, *Hungarian Tragedy and Other Writings on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution* (London: Index, 1997); and B. Lomax, *Hungary 1956* (London: Allison & Busby, 1976).

5 On the role and history of West German Trotskyists within the SPD, notably as masterminds of an influential publication spanning the years 1954–66, *Sozialistische Politik* (SOPÖ), see G. Kritidis, *Linkssozialistische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*

the Belgian socialist party on both sides of the linguistic divide. As was the case with the West German SOPO, La Gauche and Links gave voice to non-traditional, often radically new approaches to left-wing politics drawing on a multitude of different traditions going far beyond the contributions of the Trotskyist core, in effect constituting essential building blocks of the nascent New Left in the Belgian state.⁶

Other currents that predate 1956 and that are often unjustly excluded from the hall of fame of the founding generation of the New Left include notably the ill-defined and elusive but nonetheless very real and influential groupings and individuals often described as Left Christian. Jean-François Kesler has highlighted the crucial role of Left Catholic organizations and individuals in keeping alive the system-transforming message and meaning of socialism in France.⁷ In the United States, the quintessential grouping of the New Left, Students for a Democratic Society, drew amongst others on strong Left Christian traditions.⁸ The influential Spanish New Left, the Frente de Liberación Popular (FLP), at its point of origin in 1956 was composed almost entirely of devout and practising Catholic students.⁹

Yet new subcultures likewise played important roles in the strengthening and popularity of the New Left. Various 'bohemian' traditions of course predate the mid-1950s, but the attraction of alternative counter-cultural phenomena grew exponentially in the late 1950s and even more so the 1960s. Initially often almost entirely apolitical, such challenges to traditional culture, even cultures of the left, slowly began to develop ties to radical non-conformist political currents and eventually merged into the various subcultures that gave voice and prominence to the New Left. Beat culture, jazz venues, and later on the hippie crowd soon became incubators for alternative political – and not just cultural – ideas and actions. One of the finest studies of

(Hanover: Offizin, 2008), pp. 235–85. On Trotskyist entrust tactics within the SPD, see *Georg Jungclas 1902–1975. Eine politische Dokumentation* (Hamburg: Junius, 1980).

6 N. Latteur, *La gauche en mal de la gauche* (Paris: De Boeck, 2000).

7 J.-F. Kesler, *De la Gauche dissidente au nouveau Parti Socialiste. Les minorités qui ont rénové le PS* (Toulouse: Privat, 1990).

8 D. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), may stand for other publications making this important link.

9 J. A. García Alcalá, *Historia del 'Felipe' (FLP, FOC y ESBA). De Julio Cerón a la Liga Comunista Revolucionaria* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2001) remains the most informative reference for this indispensable example of a powerful New Left organizing in the anti-Franco underground. For a transnational analysis and description of the phenomenon of Left Catholicism, see G.-R. Horn, *The Spirit of Vatican II: Western European Progressive Catholicism in the Long Sixties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

the gradual emergence of such a non-conformist set of subcultures focuses on a rather unlikely location for the rise of any alternative cultures, let alone the New Left: the capital city of Switzerland, Bern. In two fascinating volumes, Fredi Lerch masterfully demonstrates how initially by all accounts rather marginal individuals, initially most at home in the jazz cellars of Bern, eventually mutated into anti-war activists and challengers of Swiss traditions.¹⁰ A recent insightful account of the contributions by West Germany's colourful counter-culture to the rise of the extra-parliamentary New Left in the 1960s provides more evidence of this creative link between artistic and political non-conformity.¹¹ And, of course, the peculiar ebullience of several waves of non-traditional protest movements which grew into major challenges to politics as usual in the Netherlands at the very same time once again points to this crucial interface of artistic and political radicalism in New Left culture.¹²

In the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s, the most powerful transnational social movements to elicit the tireless support of the early New Left were the movements in solidarity with the Algerian Revolution and the first wave of the anti-nuclear weapons movement.¹³ And it was in the context of the emerging New Left's engagement in these dynamic social movements, which had been abandoned or, worse yet, were actively combated by the mainstream forces of the Old Left, that the initially rather small networks of dissident, proto-New Left activists began to obtain sizeable numbers of recruits. From circles of disenchanted members of Old Left organizations, with a heavy sprinkling of intellectuals in their ranks, by the 1960s the emerging New Left increasingly included youthful – often student – members, for whom

10 F. Lerch, *Begerts letzte Lektion. Ein subkultureller Aufbruch* (Zurich: Rotpunkt, 1996); F. Lerch, *Müllers Weg ins Paradies. Nonkonformismus im Bern der sechziger Jahre* (Zurich: Rotpunkt, 2001).

11 M. Lee, *Utopia and Dissent in West Germany* (London: Routledge, 2019).

12 The modern classic on the Provos is N. Pas, *Imaazje! De verbeelding van Provo 1965–1967* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003). A stimulating volume, tracing several related and consecutive counter-cultural cum political movements in the Netherlands, is V. Mamadouh, *De stad in eigen hand. Provo's, kabouters en krakers als stedelijke sociale beweging* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1992). For a general overview of cultural non-conformity as breeding ground for the social movements of the Long Sixties, see ch. 1, 'Outcasts, Dropouts, and Provocateurs', in G.-R. Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 9–53.

13 K. Benamara and F. Keller, *Solidarité en action. Soutien européen à la résistance algérienne 1954–1963* (Algiers: Barkat, 2013). On the numerically even more important anti-nuclear weapons movement, see H. Nehring, *The Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and L. S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

the structures of the Old Left had never formed a particular point of attraction. Some of the internationally most well-known organizations of the 1960s New Left were student organizations, the classic examples being the movements in the United States and West Germany which, by a quirk of linguistic fate, sported the identical abbreviation: SDS.¹⁴ Both organizations, incidentally, stood in a direct line of continuity with student groups belonging to Second International socialism, once again underscoring the element of continuity in change with regard to the history of the New Left.

Changes in Outlook of the Old Left

Unlike socialist parties, communist parties had been kept away from the feeding troughs of political power, notably coalition governments with more conservative forces, in the interwar time period. In the first months and years after the Second World War, benefiting from war-time alliances with Western powers, this reluctance to govern with more moderate parties was abandoned on a quasi-continental scale almost overnight,¹⁵ and with ministerial posts came 'ministerial' behaviour. Already during the period of popular fronts in the 1930s, when communist parties first went public with moderate points of view, on 11 June 1936, in the middle of a massive strike wave, Maurice Thorez had seen fit to address striking workers with the words: 'One must know how to end a strike', and deeds followed words. During the period 1944–7, between liberation and the outbreak of the Cold War, such attitudes were once again openly aired and acted upon.¹⁶ A gulf began to open up between actually existing social movements and communist leaders and policies. Depending on the vagaries of the subsequent Cold War, more militant stances occasionally returned to the surface, but the latent split or at least alienation between communist parties and social movements affected not only working-class issues. When the socialist prime minister of France, Guy Mollet, legislated special powers to crush the Algerian revolt in the mid-1950s, the French Communist Party (PCF)

14 K. Sale, *SDS: The Rise and Development of the Students for a Democratic Society* (New York: Random, 1973); S. Lönnendonker, B. Rabehl, and J. Staadt, *Die antiautoritäre Revolte. Der Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund nach der Trennung von der SPD* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), remain the most convincing analytical surveys.

15 A. Agosti, 'Recasting Democracy? Communist Parties Facing Change and Reconstruction in Postwar Europe', in G.-R. Horn and P. Kenney (eds.), *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 3–26.

16 G.-R. Horn, *The Moment of Liberation in Western Europe: Power Struggles and Rebellions, 1943–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Table 25.1 Membership
of the Italian Communist
Youth Federation, 1961–1970

Year	Membership
1961	240,000
1962	175,000
1966	154,485
1967	135,012
1968	125,438
1969	68,648
1970	66,451

voted for this bill in March 1956, a measure justifying the subsequent use of concentration camps and torture on French Algerian soil.¹⁷

By 1968, as Giulia Strippoli shows, the link between powerful grassroots social movements and communist parties had grown ever more tenuous, though with important differences from case to case.¹⁸ The most impressive proof of the increasing non-correspondence between international communism and dynamic social movements is a quick glance at membership figures for the Italian Communist Youth Federation (Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana, FGCI) precisely in the decade when youth radicalization gripped the world. Italian communism was then for good reason considered as the least Stalinist of all European sections. But, as youth mobilizations multiplied across the Italian state, the membership of the FGCI decreased and then plummeted exactly at the moment of greatest activism on all youth fronts in the radical biennium of 1968–9 (see Table 25.1 for the figures).¹⁹

Socialist parties had become reliable coalition partners in governments with more moderate allies ever since the outbreak of the First World War. Socialists continued their orientation towards coalition politics throughout the post-Second World War period. There is no better graphic example for the remarkable final adieu to social movement culture by Second International socialism than the final paroxysms of the German SPD in this regard. Born as the political wing of social movements in the second half of

17 E. Davey, *Idealism beyond Borders: The French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism, 1954–1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 65.

18 G. Strippoli, *Il partito e il movimento. Comunisti europei alla prova del Sessantotto* (Rome: Carocci, 2013).

19 D. Giachetti, *Anni sessanta comincia la danza. Giovani, capelloni, studenti ed estremisti negli anni della contestazione* (Pisa: BFS, 2002), p. 163.

the nineteenth century, its last serious engagement with grassroots social movements occurred in the second half of the 1950s, when the SPD initially co-operated in the founding of a protest movement to oppose the West German conservative government's approval for the stationing of tactical atomic weapons on German soil. The movement took off like wildfire in 1957, with up to 83 per cent of the West German population, having barely survived Second World War bombardments, opposed to the deployment of atomic weapons and 52 per cent approving strikes as means to pre-empt such moves. The SPD and the main trade union federation, closely linked to the SPD, disapproved of strikes as protest tactics, preferring to hedge their bets on a referendum instead. When the German Constitutional Court outlawed such a referendum on 30 July 1958, German social democracy simply abandoned the campaign to oppose nuclear weapons, and the Campaign Against Atomic Death collapsed.²⁰

Elsewhere, socialist parties did not do much better, even and especially in the Long Sixties, when social movements thrived and prospered. For example, consider the near-total disappearance of French socialism precisely in the wake of the extraordinary mass mobilizations of May–June 1968. In the June 1969 presidential elections, the SFIO candidate, Gaston Defferre, received no less and no more than 5.01 per cent of the popular vote, an incontrovertible piece of evidence of the spiritual and moral destitution of the erstwhile party of Léon Blum and Jean Jaurès. International communism and Second International socialism jointly paved the way for the ascension of a New Left which would attempt to pick up the pieces when the Old Left had abandoned – or was in the process of abandoning – the terrain.

The Old Left and the New

It is exceedingly difficult to pinpoint the ideological outlook of disparate international political currents which, certainly in the case of the New Left, thrived on individuality and the celebration of difference. Still, it is, in my view, possible and necessary to point to several red threads in New Left ideology and political culture, which served as points of attraction for several generations of activists after 1956, for whom the outlook of the Old Left no longer served as inspiration.

²⁰ D. L. Parness, *The SPD and the Challenge of Mass Politics: The Dilemma of the German Volkspartei* (Boulder: Westview, 1991), pp. 84–5. More generally on this important moment, see H.-K. Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer. Der Kampf gegen die Atombewaffnung in den fünfziger Jahren* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1984).

Traditionally, both branches of the Old Left tended to stress economic exploitation as the major motivating force for engagement in progressive activism, be it revolutionary (in the distant past) or gradualist (during the period under review). Correspondingly, industrial workers and trade unions were seen as key driving forces of change. New Left activists had many different conceptions as to the role of private property and class struggle in the making of the modern world. But even when organizations of the New Left insisted on the continued relevance of class struggle as a determinant of a brighter future, New Left activists rarely left it at this. Where the Old Left emphasized economics, the New Left stressed culture.

Not all New Left activists considered themselves revolutionaries; significant numbers of New Left members were more likely to have been content with progressive system-transforming structural changes. But this radical change – or this revolution, for short – should also be a cultural revolution and not just a revolution in property relations. Revolution (or fundamental societal changes) should not just bring about economic and institutional changes. They should usher in a whole new way of living and interacting. The eyes should not remain fixed solely on the prize of eliminating exploitation but, even more so, also alienation. Not just capitalism but authority structures in general were to be opposed. Replacing capitalism with another ‘ism’ would not usher in the end of authoritarian rule. The New Left consistently stressed anti-hierarchical, anti-institutional, and anti-bureaucratic means and goals. The desirable society of the future should elevate self-determination and self-management in all walks of life to pride of place.

Correspondingly, where the Old Left tended to be primarily concerned with ‘objective conditions’, the New Left single-mindedly focused on ‘subjective conditions’. Second International socialism, but also plenty of communist ideologues, frequently invoked the supposed inevitability of socialism. The conditions of everyday life, sometimes seen as undergoing an inevitable deterioration, would naturally and in full internal logic bring about radical change. The famous adage of Karl Marx that ‘being determines consciousness’²¹ was reinterpreted to mean that the desirable social changes will inevitably come about, similar to the way that traditional Christian doctrine promised redemption in a glorious afterlife following death. New Left activists, by contrast, stressed the role of individual action and collective

21 The actual quote from *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* is: ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.’ See *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), vol. XXIX, p. 263.

will. Without active engagement and resistance to the powers-that-be, the necessary and desirable changes will never materialize.

At first sight paradoxically, New Left activists and New Left ideology placed far less emphasis on organization and structure in comparison with the Old Left. For the Old Left, political parties and trade unions were seen as the chief organizational vehicles for radical change. By contrast, New Left milieux placed far more stress on the anticipation of the future in counter-institutions in the here and now. Co-operative ventures are stressed, fostered, and built. Community projects are created and supported and, usually at later stages, communal living and working are seen as the way to strengthen and reinforce these goals. Direct action and civil disobedience take precedence over party-building. Small groups, rather than impersonal large organizations, are to enable the immediacy of membership interaction to persist over time. Personal interaction is stressed to avoid bureaucratization. And, in full logic, broad mass mobilizations, social movements, regardless of their social class composition, are seen as key to change reality.

It only stands to reason that the New Left no longer regarded workers as the sole and indispensable force to bring about radical changes. Few New Left detachments completely discounted blue- and white-collar workers as important allies on the road to a self-determined future. But workers, no matter how defined, no longer dominated the imaginary of New Left radicals as had been the case in the ideology and practice of the Second and Third Internationals. The New Left engaged in an intense search for other agents of social change. And they found them clustered in other social groups. Depending on location and circumstance, the menu of options soon appeared to be wide-ranging and seemingly unlimited. Intellectuals, students, Third World peasants, disadvantaged ethnic minorities, youth in general – these and other social forces now ascended into the pantheon of agents and allies on the road to emancipation. Mass movements, regardless of social class, were seen as key to radical change.

Last but not least, the historical reference points for New Left blueprints for radical social change could not have been any more different from the supposed lessons and warnings of history for the average activist of the Old Left. For the Old Left in the 1950s and 1960s, the experience of the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, and the Nazi occupation of much of Europe played central roles. For the New Left, certainly for their increasingly dominant young membership and ever-widening circles of sympathizers which swelled the New Left in the 1960s, depression and war were absolutely not part of their immediate experience. They may have been born in the course of the Second

World War,²² but they were children of the post-war boom. Their mental universe was much more likely to have been shaped by consumption, suburban life, and/or the relatively carefree and privileged atmosphere of university campuses than the stark realities of working-class districts in industrial cities. The New Left generation was the first TV generation. A general sense of prosperity and expanding horizons shaped their universe. They were not depressed by the defeats of the past. They looked forward to a radiant future.

Prosperity Meets Third World Revolution

By the 1960s, in the run-up to 1968, the New Left gave voice to the wishes of a young generation that became increasingly convinced of its own invincibility and the righteousness of its cause. Certainly, in the age of napalm and Agent Orange, it often was not overly difficult to choose sides and to engage in political action. And here the peculiar circumstances of what the French call the *trente glorieuses*, the post-Second World War boom, reinforced the moral choices made by countless activists, who felt emboldened to reach for the stars. The multiple problems facing humanity no longer appeared to be unsolvable. All obstacles to progress appeared to become, at least in principle, surmountable. An atmosphere was thus created that in many ways resembled the peculiar political and intellectual circumstances characterizing, for instance, the so-called *Vormärz*, the period preceding the wave of European revolutions of 1848.

Between 1815 and 1848 generally rather conservative regimes were in positions of political power in Europe. Yet, during this *Vormärz*, democratic and liberal nationalist movements felt the wind in their sails. Not for nothing did writers and artists frontally attack long-established conservative traditions, with movements promoting liberty, equality, and humanity – and most frequently invoking the label ‘youth’: Young Italy, Young Germany, Young Poland, Young Ireland, by 1834 federating into Young Europe, headquartered in Switzerland – calling for wide-ranging political changes and improved circumstances of everyday life. Then, from 1830 onwards, several European states experienced popular revolutions which appeared to usher in a new period of radical hope.

The years up to and including 1968 likewise witnessed hybrid situations of conservative regimes in power (Christian democracy in Italy, Germany, Belgium, etc., Gaullism in France), but with left-leaning intellectuals frequently

22 Four examples: Rudi Dutschke, the quintessential spokesperson for the German Radical Left, was born on 7 March 1940; Tariq Ali, the British Dutschke, of Pakistani descent, on 21 October 1943; Mario Capanna, a central leader of the Italian student left, on 10 January 1945; Daniel Cohn-Bendit, on 4 April 1945.

prominent in academic and artistic circles and public discourse. The 1950s may sometimes be regarded as ‘The American Century’, and the official ideology of this period may have proclaimed ‘the end of ideology’,²³ but the tide appeared to be turning for anyone who cared to see. To be sure, unlike the wave of revolutions in and around 1830 (France, Belgium, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland), Europe west of the Iron Curtain was remarkably stable between 1945 and 1968, yet the difference was merely that now the impetus towards radical political change came from outside Europe, oftentimes former colonies of European states.

The Indonesian Revolution, the Algerian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, and the decades-long Vietnamese Revolution provided ample evidence that radical regime change was possible and desirable. For students and intellectuals, increasingly trained to look at politics and society from



Fig. 25.1 The International Vietnam Congress, West Berlin, 17–18 February 1968, was probably the most representative gathering of the international New Left ever to take place. Forty-four delegations from 18 countries and a total of about 5,000 individuals filled the Auditorium Maximum at the Technical University to overflowing. (Photograph by Mehner/Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

23 D. Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

a global perspective, nothing appeared more obvious than to regard the wave of anti-colonial and radical revolutions affecting many portions of the Third World as portents of things to come much closer to home. It is sometimes overlooked that one of the triggers of student radicalization in the Long Sixties was the early engagement of newly politicized individuals in solidarity campaigns with Third World revolutions. For many young activists in the run-up to 1968, it was the confrontation with the reality of Third World misery and revolt which first sharpened their awareness of inequalities back home. Realizing the oftentimes intimate links between metropolitan European (but of course not *just* European) economic and political mechanisms and decisions vis-à-vis countries and movements in other parts of the world helped to refocus the youthful protestors' initially oftentimes purely moral and righteous critique of unequal power relationships in the world onto the mechanics of domination and exploitation back home. Third World solidarity activists based in Europe thus eventually mutated into First World radicals and even revolutionaries.²⁴

The Bombshell of 1968: From the New to the Far Left

And then, as if it had been planned (which it was not) or as divine providence (also unlikely), the explosions of 1968 added revolutionary fervour to this volatile mix of objective and subjective circumstances. In an extraordinary rapid-fire sequence of events, in country after country on virtually all continents, open political revolts occurred which quite literally shook the world. There is no need to recap the storyline of rebellion simultaneously gripping the First, Second, and Third Worlds.²⁵ Perhaps the most concentrated expression on European soil was the vast social

24 A gradually growing number of serious and important studies point to this link between Third World solidarity work and subsequent attention to class and other inequalities closer to home. See Ch. Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt. Dekolonialisierung und neue radikale Linke in Frankreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2011), now also available in English as *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c. 1950–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); M. Kalt, *Tiersmondismus in der Schweiz der 1960er und 1970er Jahre. Von der Barmherzigkeit zur Solidarität* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); D. Weitbrecht, *Aufbruch in die Dritte Welt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012); Q. Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

25 D. Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), and T. Ali and S. Watkins, *1968: Marching in the Streets* (New York: Free Press, 1998), remain excellent surveys. For a more recent concise summary, note also G.-R. Horn, '1968: A Social Movement Sui Generis', in S. Berger and H. Nehring

movement and three-week-long general strike in what was then still the world's fifth-largest industrial power: France. Suddenly, everything appeared to be truly possible. The smell of revolution was in the air. But, as is all too well-known, the various movements ended in relative or absolute defeats. Just like the *Vormärz* had culminated in the springtime of peoples and the revolutions of 1848, only for them to be rapidly crushed one-by-one, the various socio-political rebellions of 1968 soon ended in victory for the conservative defenders of tradition and the status quo.

What should have been the victory of the New Left instead turned into a funeral procession. As a leading Spanish New Left activist once cogently remarked: 'The FLP [i.e., the Spanish New Left] died of the complications of the French May '68.'²⁶ And these words could just as easily have been pronounced by New Left activists elsewhere, from San Francisco to Berlin. When the smoke from tear-gas grenades to put down the flames of revolt in Berlin, Belgrade, or Buenos Aires had dissipated, an extraordinary process of rethinking set in within the ranks of what was left of the New Left. How could such an extraordinary opportunity to change the world have ended with the strengthening of conservative forces both in the West and in the Stalinist East? How to explain that what seemed like a simultaneous assault on the social order in all three sectors of the hoped-for world revolution (First, Second, and Third World) went nowhere fast and fizzled out? What had the small armies of hopeful revolutionaries done wrong?

In my *The Spirit of '68*, I briefly sketched out how some of the most flexible and innovative members of the New Left began to search for answers and new models.²⁷ Quickly, in virtually all countries at the same time, a slowly emerging consensus emerged. Not that all puzzled New Left activists came up with identical solutions. Sizeable numbers returned to the surviving battalions of the Old Left, in the process bestowing a certain rebound of popularity on social democracy and communism. Yet for many the salvation was sought and found in the supposed lessons of the one successful revolution in the twentieth century: the Bolshevik Revolution. New Left activists, who had hitherto shunned historical examples in the firm conviction that the future was theirs, turned to the one relatively recent – in 1968 the Russian Revolution was barely more than fifty years old – revolution that had not failed, regardless of whether it was seen as subsequently betrayed

(eds.), *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey* (London: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 515–41.

26 J. Leguina, cited in García Alcalá, *Historia del Felipe*, p. 261.

27 Horn, *The Spirit of '68*, pp. 155–63.

(Trotskyism) or not (Maoism). It suddenly appeared to become obvious to erstwhile stalwarts of the New Left that the New Left embrace of decentralization, pluralism, absence of firm organizational structures, and the toleration of multiple competing approaches on how to change society and the world were precisely what was at issue in the quest for lessons from the defeats of 1968.

New Left organizations had hitherto thrived on purposeful disorganization. The internal life and modes of operation of New Left organizations often differed significantly from town to town, each location developing its own peculiar local culture, depending on individual choice and the radiance of powerful personalities with radically different visions. Henceforth, in the aftermath of the failure of 1968, strict party-political discipline would be mandated and miniature Leninist combat parties were set up; and, in general, a 180-degree turnabout from the free-flowing multiplicity of New Left approaches was effected. Most formerly vibrant and popular groupings of the New Left dissolved with few regrets. Here is what one of the most authoritative histories of the West German SDS writes about the final end of this erstwhile extremely dynamic and influential organization of the student New Left: 'On 21 March 1970 a more or less randomly put together gathering' on the campus of the University of Frankfurt voted 'by an open show of hands to dissolve the SDS Executive and thus SDS as such. No one had even bothered to attend from West Berlin [formerly the dynamo of SDS activities], and a portion of the comrades present were already keeping themselves busy with the founding of their own proletarian organizations', which they hoped would evolve into fully fledged Leninist parties.²⁸ The era of New Left hegemony had come to a close. The proto-Leninist Far Left had taken over its mission.

The Mediterranean New Left

Virtually all of the preceding discussions on the history, nature, and evolution of the New Left pertain just as much to what I have labelled the 'Mediterranean New Left'.²⁹ Spanish underground student politics under

28 S. Lönnendonker, B. Rabehl, and J. Staadt, *Die antiautoritäre Revolte. Der Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund nach der Trennung von der SPD*, vol. 1, 1960–1967 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 2002), p. 140.

29 For the original formulation of this concept and the ensuing discussion, see Horn, *The Spirit of '68*, pp. 148–52; D. A. Gordon, 'A "Mediterranean New Left"? Comparing and contrasting the French PSU and the Italian PSIUP', *Contemporary European History* 19, 4 (2010), pp. 309–30; R. Colozza, 'Socialismes face à face. Les cas du Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) et du Partito Socialista Italiana d'Unità Proletaria (PSIUP)', in N. Castagnez et al.

Franco saw New Left activists in central roles from its point of origin in 1956 to the demise of the Spanish New Left in 1969. All the way up to 1969, radical student politics across the Spanish state cannot be understood without constant reference to the involvement of New Left student organizations affiliated to the FLP or their Catalan and Basque sister organizations.³⁰ Likewise, the Italian *Biennio Rosso* of 1968–9 is equally impossible to comprehend without an understanding of the central role played by Italian New Left students.³¹ Last but not least, it may suffice to point to the fact that the PSU student organization (ESU) in July 1967 gained control over the National Union of French Students (UNEF), which meant that New Left influence over the explosions of May 1968, initially concentrated in the university milieu, was guaranteed and helped to shape the contours of 1968 in France.³²

As to the extremely heterogeneous outlook of the main organization of the Italian New Left, the PSIUP, the latter's outstanding historian, Aldo Agosti, points to the central role of Marxism in forging the political imaginary of the party, but 'a Marxism open to a continuously widening and diversifying set of influences, European, Third Worldist, and even North American'.³³ The principal organization of the French New Left, the PSU, likewise incorporated a great variety of subcultures, probably even more so than the PSIUP. Here is what a close observer of the French New and Radical Left, Hélène Hatzfeld, suggests in no uncertain terms: 'By means of its openness to emerging ideas, via the reach of its activist ranks in a diverse array of alternative movements, because of its capacity to engage in activities on the margins of traditional society, to work with these marginal forces, to be influenced by these milieux, it [the PSU] has greatly contributed to the questioning of the limits of the dominant paradigm.'³⁴ And here is what the historian of the Spanish FLP, Julio

(eds.), *Le Parti Socialiste Unifié. Histoire et postérité* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 281–90.

- 30 J. Álvarez Cobelas, *Envenenados de cuerpo y alma. La oposición universitaria al franquismo en Madrid 1939–1970* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2004); G. Valdevira González, *La oposición estudiantil al franquismo* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2006); E. Hernández Sandoica, M. Angel Ruiz Carnicer, and M. Baldó Lacomba, *Estudiantes contra Franco. 1939–1975. Oposición política y movilización juvenil* (Madrid: Esfera de los Libros, 2007).
- 31 A. Agosti, L. Passerini, and N. Tranfaglia, *La cultura e i luoghi del '68* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1991); S. J. Hilwig, *Italy and 1968: Youthful Unrest and Democratic Culture* (London: Palgrave, 2009); J. Kurz, *Die Universität auf der Piazza. Entstehung und Zerfall der Studentenbewegung in Italien, 1966–1968* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 2001).
- 32 R. Barralis and J.-C. Gillet (eds.), *Au cœur des luttes des années 60. Les étudiants du PSU. Une utopie portaise d'avenir?* (Paris: Publi-Sud, 2010).
- 33 A. Agosti, *Il partito provvisorio. Storia del Psiup nel lungo Sessantotto italiano* (Rome: Laterza, 2013), p. 131.
- 34 H. Hatzfeld, 'Comment le PSU a-t-il fait de la politique autrement?' in Castagnez et al. (eds.), *Le Parti Socialiste Unifié*, p. 233.

Antonio García Alcalá, has to say about the intellectual influences of the FLP's outlook in underground Spain: 'In contradistinction to the monolithic nature of other parties, [the FLP] opted for the free interpretation of the greatest variety of authors, the latter frequently of obviously heterodox provenance. Activists could therefore simultaneously read Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Mao, Trotsky, Marx, André Gorz, Teilhard de Chardin, or Mounier; profiting from a pluralism connecting the various traditions from which FLP members could draw, such as Marxism, Christian humanism, or libertarian thought.'³⁵

What was different about the Mediterranean New Left compared with its northwest European and North American cohorts was, to put it in a nutshell, two distinctive traits: the setting up of party structures and a social composition of its membership which went far beyond the university student milieu. These specific characteristics of the Mediterranean New Left are, of course, linked to the fact that, by and large, the southern tier of European states witnessed more protracted and heated socio-political struggles than their northern neighbours.³⁶ The three flagship organizations of the Mediterranean New Left were founded as political parties in 1958 (Spain), 1960 (France), and 1963 (Italy), unifying earlier pre-existing currents within and outside Old Left structures.

Despite its origins as a Left Catholic student group, the Spanish New Left FLP quickly developed firm links with working-class milieux, contributing in no small way to the rise of independent working-class activism in the Francoist underground all the way up to the demise of the FLP in 1969.³⁷ The PSU had relatively close ties to the traditionally Catholic trade union federation, the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFDT), which had severed its official ties to the Catholic pillar in 1964, and from 1968 onward became the quintessential proponent of a radical social movement unionism in pursuit of workers' self-management. A sociological study published in 1969 suggests that blue- and white-collar workers comprised a by no means insignificant minority of the total PSU membership: blue-collar workers comprised 12.9 per cent of PSU members in 1968; white-collar workers comprised another 14.2 per cent of the total membership in 1968.³⁸

³⁵ García Alcalá, *Historia del Felipe*, pp. 21–2. ³⁶ Horn, *The Spirit of '68*, pp. 228–31.

³⁷ García Alcalá, *Historia del Felipe*, pp. 215–29; for Spain as a whole, and for the important role of the New Left in underground working-class activism in Catalonia, see J. A. Díaz, *Luchas internas en comisiones obreras. Barcelona 1964–1970* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1977).

³⁸ Y. Tavernier and R. Cayrol, 'Sociologie des adhérents du Parti Socialiste Unifié', *Revue française de science politique* 19, 3 (1969), pp. 699–707 at p. 705. Students, incidentally, only accounted for 10.9 per cent of the total membership.

Table 25.2 Sociological profile of PSIUP membership

Membership	December 1965	December 1968
Total membership	164,451	181,753
Blue collar	35.1%	42.2%
Farm labourers/peasants	34.3%	29.3%
White collar	4.5%	6.8%
Students	2.6%	4.2%

The working-class dimension of the Mediterranean New Left emerges most persuasively in the case of the Italian PSIUP. By early 1965, the PSIUP, with more than 150,000 members in toto, had managed to attract Vittorio Foa, co-chair of the major General Italian Confederation of Labour (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, CGIL) at that time, sixty chairpersons of provincial CGIL labour exchanges, and one-third of all chairpersons heading CGIL national branch federations.³⁹ Yet the PSIUP did not attract just top union officials into its ranks. Table 25.2 demonstrates the working-class sociological profile of the PSIUP as a whole.⁴⁰

The New Left in Eastern Europe

Communist eastern Europe never could produce New Left organizations along lines comparable even to the Spanish New Left, which also had to operate clandestinely. Except for brief moments in 1956 and 1968, repression in Stalinist Europe was even more brutal and efficient than in Franco's Spain. Still, networks and circles of like-minded individuals, as in western Europe often particularly strong in university milieux, existed more or less precariously during such moments of crisis and opportunity as briefly emerged in 1956 and 1968. Tom Junes has portrayed in exemplary fashion how the relative thaw in international communism after Stalin's death in March 1953 led to various manoeuvres on the part of disaffected students. By 1955, a group of student activists within the communist-controlled Union of Polish Youth (Związek Młodzieży Polskiej, ZMP) gained control over the editorial board of the ZMP weekly *Po Prostu* (*Plainly Speaking*) and used this platform to attack the ZMP's old-style leadership, to promote what they regarded as a direly needed revision of ossified Stalinist Marxism, and to

39 Agosti, *Storia del Psiup*, p. 56. 40 Ibid., pp. 187–8.

construct a radical alternative to the ZMP. *Po Prostu* also facilitated and guided the creation of clubs throughout major cities in Poland which 'became the scene of spirited discussions catalysing the radical ferment and discontent among the younger generation'. By December 1956, it resulted in the founding of a Revolutionary Youth Union which attempted to promote the spirit of rebellion which in many ways was remarkably similar to the New Left project to the west of the Iron Curtain.⁴¹

In neighbouring Hungary, the Petöfi Circle, founded by the official Hungarian Communist youth organization as an open discussion forum in March 1956, performed a task similar to the leading lights behind *Po Prostu* north of the border. On 16 October, an independent student association called MEFESZ (Magyar Egyetemisták és Főiskolások Szövetsége) got off the ground in Hungary, just in time to immerse itself in the ensuing society-wide rebellion of late October and early November 1956.⁴² In Czechoslovakia, in 1956, students began to organize along similar lines, utilizing the facilities and structures of the official Communist Youth Union as their platform. Even in Romania, the spirit of revolt inspired radical student protest activity in the magic year of 1956.⁴³

Two of the most prominent student activists in Poland in 1956 were Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski. In the wake of 1956, together with others, they continued to agitate in various legal and semi-legal settings for their ideas, eventually leading to their expulsion from the university positions they had in the meantime obtained. In the process of their self-defence, they wrote and distributed the most famous document of the anti-Stalinist left-wing opposition to emerge from eastern Europe between 1956 and 1968, the 1964 *Open Letter to the Communist Party*, a ringing plaidoyer in which New Left and Trotskyist ideas and roadmaps for an anti-bureaucratic and democratic socialist society were aired in a clear and persuasive manner. In response, in 1965, the authors were sentenced to three and two-and-a-half years in prison, respectively.⁴⁴ One of the witnesses testifying on behalf of Kuroń and

41 T. Junes, *Student Politics in Communist Poland: Generations of Consent and Dissent* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), p. 48.

42 Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, remains an excellent point of departure for the dynamics of opposition currents in the Hungarian Revolution.

43 J. P. C. Matthews, 'Majales: The Abortive Student Revolt in Czechoslovakia in 1956', Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No. 24, September 1998; J. Granville, "'If Hope Is Sin, Then We Are All Guilty': Romanian Students' Reactions to the Hungarian Revolution and Soviet Intervention, 1956–1958', *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* 1905 (2008).

44 Junes, *Student Politics*, pp. 77–8.

Modzelewski was Leszek Kołakowski, a well-known Polish philosopher, who had already made a name for himself as an advocate of a Marxist humanism.

Leszek Kołakowski was by then firmly integrated into international circles of New Left social theorists and philosophers circling the globe. In the summer of 1957, for instance, he had hosted two leading thinkers and activists within the British and US-American New Left, Ralph Miliband and C. Wright Mills, for a series of extended discussions.⁴⁵ Kołakowski, in 1956 already a lecturer at the University of Warsaw, spoke out in favour of students in the 1956 revolt, then repeating his courageous acts in the March 1968 Polish student revolt. For in 1968, another wave of anti-Stalinist, anti-hierarchical rebellion swept through eastern Europe. It would exceed the space available here to document this second transnational wave which, in significant ways, repeated the tropes of opposition currents in 1956.⁴⁶ Hungary was this time less directly affected, the most famous manifestation of a societal groundswell for 'socialism with a human face' occurring in Czechoslovakia. A new hotspot of anti-authoritarianism emerged, however, in Yugoslavia, where radical student protests shook up the capital city, one of their central slogans – 'Down with the Red Bourgeoisie!' – indicating the direction in which activists wished their society to be going.⁴⁷

Few amongst the Czechoslovak citizens mobilizing in the course of the Prague Spring would have identified themselves as supporters of New Left ideology, although many of them would probably have been unaware of this term. Not all Yugoslav activists who occupied the University of Belgrade and renamed this flagship institution the 'Red Karl Marx University' would have placed their insurgency in the context of the international New Left. But the Belgrade students' insistence on the necessity for the full implementation of a radically democratic system of self-management in Yugoslavia and their urgent call to convert Titoist promises of a 'third way' beyond Stalinism and capitalism into actual *praxis* were nothing but classic manifestations of the New Left spirit of revolt.

And *Praxis* was the name of a philosophical journal by Yugoslav revisionist Marxist intellectuals which more than any other publication gave voice and

45 M. Newman, *Ralph Miliband and the Politics of the New Left* (London: Merlin, 2002), pp. 66–7.

46 For insightful surveys, see A. Ebbinghaus (ed.), *Die letzte Chance? 1968 in Osteuropa* (Hamburg: VSA, 2008); A. Konarzewska, A. Nakai, and M. Przeperski (eds.), *Unsettled 1968 in the Troubled Present: Revisiting the 50 Years of Discussions from East and Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2019).

47 B. Kanzleiter, 'Rote Universität'. *Studentenbewegung und Linksoption in Belgrad, 1964–1975* (Hamburg: VSA, 2011); B. Kanzleiter and K. Stojaković (eds.), *1968 in Jugoslawien. Studentenproteste und kulturelle Avantgarde zwischen 1960 und 1975* (Bonn: Dietz, 2008).

radiance to ideas and blueprints – the theory – in the orbit of the international New Left. A team of Yugoslav philosophers and social theorists edited Serbo-Croatian (1964–74) and foreign editions (1965–73), the latter in multiple languages. Not content with the publication of an influential cutting-edge journal, the organizers also hosted each summer an international symposium to which they invited leading European and North American representatives of innovative non-conformist philosophy and social theory, a literal who's who of revisionist Marxism and other progressive ideologies and methodological approaches. Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, Jürgen Habermas, Ágnes Heller, Leszek Kołakowski, Henri Lefebvre, Ernest Mandel, and Herbert Marcuse were only some of the prominent intellectuals whose publications contributed to and were influenced by New Left thought and practice – and who benefited from the congenial environment of the Adriatic island of Korčula to exchange ideas and to understand and change their world. If a monument to the international New Left should ever be built, it should be placed in the town of Korčula where the gatherings were held.⁴⁸

The New Left in Japan

The New Left thus covered both parts of Europe, East and West, as well as North America. But what about Asia, Africa, and Latin America? Here the relevant research is still mostly in its infant stages, and the lack of data (and lack of space in this chapter) does not permit anything more than semi-educated guesstimates for most of these geographical units of analysis. It would be impossible and counterproductive to give an encyclopaedic survey of all relevant states. For the case of Asia, it must suffice to concentrate on the case of Japan, as one example of this universal trend.

In Japan, most observers point to the umbrella group of radical university student associations, Zengakuren, founded in September 1948, as the quintessential organization of the Japanese New Left. Initially controlled by forces oriented towards the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), militant dissident communist currents 'took control of Zengakuren at the organization's rally in June 1956'.⁴⁹ And it is from that moment onward that historians begin to

48 Still the most informative publication in a Western language on this experience and conjuncture is G. S. Sher, *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

49 S. A. Avenell, *Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 69.

refer to the emergence of a powerful New Left in Japan.⁵⁰ Yet what stands out from the beginning of the post-1956 radicalization of Zengakuren is that, applying the criteria which I earlier adduced to distinguish the Far Left from the New Left in Europe, the dominant currents in the welter of frequently morphing tendencies in the subsequent two decades within Zengakuren were closest to the habits and mindsets of the *Far Left* rather than the New Left. The Trotskyist critique initially exercised hegemony within Zengakuren, though soon certain strands of diffuse Maoist ideology began to emerge as an even more powerful forcefield within Zengakuren, with a 'pro-Italian' tendency – 'Structural Reformists in the Palmiro Togliatti mode'⁵¹ – for some time in the early 1960s firmly anchored in Zengakuren as well. Unlike the cases of western Europe and North America, then, the year 1956 brought an early manifestation of the Far Left – and not the New Left! – to centre stage within the Japanese Left. New Left currents in the sense defined and referred to earlier in this chapter did not arise until the mid-1960s, reversing the chronology of events prevailing in most other parts of the world.

An early laboratory of proto-New Left activism was provided by a massive social movement, named ANPO or anti-ANPO, strongest in 1959 and 1960, opposing the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (ANPO), mobilizing hundreds of thousands of Japanese in protest demonstrations, including strikes. 'The ANPO struggle was one of those historical moments when multiple streams of thought and action were unwittingly drawn together in a vortex of society-wide unrest.'⁵² In the eyes of another historian, 'the ANPO movement represents the first, possibly only time in Japanese post-war history when a complete spectrum of society rallied to a cause and protested against what was seen as a bulldozing of parliamentary democracy'.⁵³ An alliance of social democracy, communism, Japan's major trade union federation, and Zengakuren united in a fight which was eventually lost; but 'ANPO was undeniably an exciting time to live through, rich in characters and drama'.⁵⁴ ANPO was a crucible that no single tendency could control and that, five years later, helped to give rise to the quintessential organization of the Japanese New Left.

50 C. Derichs focuses on processes in the year 1958 as the founding moment of the Japanese New Left, see C. Derichs, *Japans Neue Linke. Soziale Bewegung und außerparlamentarische Opposition, 1957–1994* (Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, 1995), p. 60.

51 W. Andrews, *Dissenting Japan: A History of Japanese Radicalism and Counterculture, from 1945 to Fukushima* (London: Hurst, 2016), p. 81.

52 Avenell, *Making Japanese Citizens*, p. 105. 53 Andrews, *Dissenting Japan*, p. 26.

54 Ibid., p. 43.

Focusing throughout its decade of existence (1965–74) on opposition to the American war in Vietnam as well as Japanese complicity, Beheiren emerged seemingly out of nowhere when it organized its first public demonstration on 24 April 1965, with 1,500 marchers holding ‘hand-made signs, balloons and flowers’.⁵⁵ By 1965, the mainstream currents of the Japanese Left had lost some of their lustre. The Old Left had proceeded on its steady path towards moderation and had increasingly lost influence over significant sections of Japanese public opinion. Zengakuren, more than ever dominated by Maoist and Trotskyist currents, had embarked on its forward march towards ever more militant and increasingly violent tactics. From the mid-1960s onwards, the various factions of Zengakuren, for instance, adopted helmets and sharp-edged staves of hard timber as their preferred weapons of combat, often in sectarian infighting amongst themselves.

Thus, when Beheiren appeared on the public stage in April 1965, its image could not have been any more different compared with the sole other organization of the radical Japanese Left, the Zengakuren. ‘By keeping the demonstrations and rallies non-violent, people could participate comfortably. Flowers were used as a symbol of resistance. Instead of long wooden staves, so-called *gebabō*, carried by helmeted New [Far] Left student activists, Beheiren activists held flowers, and gave the flowers to the passers-by while walking.’⁵⁶ In fact, like classic New Left currents elsewhere in the world – and unlike Zengakuren! – Beheiren incorporated ‘aspects of festivity into popular political action . . . building upon networks of friends’, aiming to integrate ‘a radical attempt to liberate desire and the senses’ into the political process.⁵⁷

One of Beheiren’s quintessential public performance spectacles began on 28 February 1969, when a handful of Beheiren activists ‘started to play guitars and sing in the open space called the “West Wing Underground Plaza” at Shinjuku station [in Tokyo] on Saturdays. Shinjuku had the largest number of passengers a day of any train station in Japan.’⁵⁸ ‘The subterranean thoroughfare was already a popular spot at the time for the young to gather and engage in debate and recreation. The “folk guerrillas”, as they came to be dubbed, were soon a hit. Concerts were held there every Saturday evening, and by

55 N. Shiratori, ‘Peace in Vietnam! Beheiren: Transnational Activism and GI Movement in Postwar Japan 1965–1974’, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, 2018, p. 83.

56 Ibid., p. 86.

57 Y. Iida, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 122 and 123.

58 Shiratori, ‘Beheiren’, p. 104.

May thousands were gathering to listen, dance, and converse. Thus, began Japan's Summer of Love.⁵⁹ The same author points to another accomplishment underlining the specificity of Beheiren as the Japanese variant of the New Left: 'Impressively, it also achieved all this without centralizing. It did not even settle on a name for a year. This was not an organization; it was a movement. And precisely because of this, it was stronger and free of the ideology and factionalism that consumed many Japanese political groups', such as the Zengakuren. 'In stark contrast to the ideological posturing and fierce debates about the minutiae of slogans' in Zengakuren, the idea was 'to forget dogma and prioritize action'.⁶⁰

The historian of Beheiren, Noriko Shiratori, provides further details: 'There was no main office, and each Beheiren chapter was independent.' 'Because there was no model movement, each person had to think individually, and act accordingly.' '[T]here was no membership fee, nor bylaw nor agreement of any kind . . . and nobody received direction or orders from anywhere.'⁶¹ A prominent activist in Beheiren remembered more than thirty years later that: 'I was surprised to find a movement like that existed. It was refreshingly surprising . . . going from the JCP to Beheiren was like when a curtain opens and the screen spreads wide in the movie theater.'⁶² Another former Beheiren militant recalled: 'They were not regimented but distinguishingly amorphous.'⁶³

Beheiren may have shunned faction fights and the overt display of party-political labels; yet it was by no means apolitical. From 1967 onwards, Beheiren devoted significant efforts to organizing an 'underground railroad' to the Soviet Union for American GIs wishing to desert their units. Beheiren may have thrived on multiformity and encouragement of dissent rather than conformity, adopting innovative cultural mechanisms to convey its message, but it put forth strong political opinions. Even the Shinjuku station weekly gatherings were not solely recreational affairs. A passage in William Andrews' informative study nicely portrays the mixture of cultural and political non-conformity characteristic of Beheiren – and the New Left in general! 'The mood at the guerrilla concerts was spontaneous and infectious. The folk songs were accompanied by snake dances and refrains of The Internationale.'⁶⁴ Opposition to the American war in Vietnam was the

59 Andrews, *Dissenting Japan*, p. 116. 60 Ibid., p. 101.

61 Shiratori, 'Beheiren', all citations on p. 71. 62 Cited *ibid.*, p. 69. 63 Ibid., p. 80.

64 Andrews, *Dissenting Japan*, p. 116. The 'snake' or 'zigzag' dance saw long columns of protestors linking arms. 'Those in the first row would hold on to a pole or stave in line and steer the others behind. This serpentine horde would then careen around,

founding principle and the life-blood of Beheiren throughout its short period of existence. But soon activists began to oppose the Japanese military-industrial complex as such, highlighting corporate complicity in this vicious cycle. Soon criticism of the paternalistic state and the ubiquity of nefarious market mechanisms became part of Beheiren lore, eventually focusing on closely linked threats to peace and democracy as such – again a development in rough similarity to the evolution of New Left thought and practice elsewhere in the world.⁶⁵

Beheiren managed at their peak in 1970 to mobilize more than 700,000 protestors throughout Japan.⁶⁶ The number of local Beheiren groups across the land grew to just shy of 400.⁶⁷ Interestingly, unlike Zengakuren and unlike much of the New Left elsewhere, Beheiren did not base its strength on university campuses. The closest equivalent to Beheiren in the Japanese university milieu was Zenkyōtō, though this student organization, despite its ‘non-sectarian and anarchistic stances’, in some respects conformed more closely to the Zengakuren model of a disciplined unit than the freewheeling atmosphere characterizing Beheiren.⁶⁸ The influence of Zengakuren was too strong to avoid for Zenkyōtō.

The Japanese New Left, then, as could only be expected, paralleled and differed from the New Left experience in other parts of the world. Preceded by a powerful Far Left, loosely federated in Zengakuren, Beheiren was, if anything, a response to the perceived shortcomings not only of the Old Left (as elsewhere), but also of the increasingly militaristic and sectarian Far Left. When the Vietnam War drew to a close, Beheiren also vanished, as the ideological glue for its structureless existence, opposition to the war, likewise vanished in the run-up to the fall of Saigon in 1975. Unlike Beheiren, Zengakuren and the Far Left continued to make waves, though increasingly focusing on vicious factionalism rather than any larger cause.⁶⁹

knocking into whatever or whoever was in their path. It was a destructive but liberating motion. The leader would blow a whistle while the others jogged in rhythm, chanting as the mass twisted around the streets. Several protestors wide, it was athletic, mesmeric and very, very effective. It would become a fixture of student and New Left demos in the years to come; see Andrews, *Dissenting Japan*, pp. 62–3.

⁶⁵ Avenell, *Making Japanese Citizens*, pp. 143–5. ⁶⁶ Andrews, *Dissenting Japan*, p. 119.

⁶⁷ Shiratori, ‘Beheiren’, p. 78. ⁶⁸ Iida, *Rethinking Identity*, pp. 123–6, citation on p. 124.

⁶⁹ William Andrews furnishes a superb chapter on the violent paroxysms of Zengakuren, ‘The Strange Death of the Japanese New Left’, in his *Dissenting Japan*, pp. 147–61; Andrews, like many other observers, mislabels (in my view) Zengakuren as the Japanese New Left.

The Latin American New Left

South America, in particular its Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay) is by now one of the few regions in the extra-European world that is no longer terra incognita for New Left Studies. In Latin America itself, however, the term 'New Left' was unknown prior to the 1980s; certainly, it was rarely utilized by contemporaneous activists in the Long Sixties. But in the past two to three decades, historians of Latin America's Radical Left have begun to have recourse to such a descriptor, in part because certain parallels with western and southern Europe in particular were too obvious to ignore. As a result, historians of Southern Cone radicalism in the Long Sixties have begun to move into the forefront of conceptual discussions of the remit and limits of the term 'New Left'.⁷⁰

Scholars of the Southern Cone Radical or New Left are, of course, rightfully concerned to point to several ideological and historical characteristics of Latin American radical politics which differed significantly from virtually all European and North American (and, for that matter, east European) variants. Anti-imperialism, Third World nationalism, and the influence of the Cuban Revolution are perhaps the three most outstanding Latin American particularisms – though Cuba played a certain role in the awakening of radical consciousness in North America.⁷¹ If the concept of a 'New Left' should ever be successfully extended to cover other parts of the Global South, certainly the first two items listed would be likely to apply to the African and Asian New Left as well. The central role of armed struggle, if not in reality but then certainly in the political imaginary of the Latin American Radical Left, is a fourth feature which is less convincingly applicable to First World radicals in the Long Sixties.

⁷⁰ For a brief but concise assessment of the state of affairs, see M. C. Tortti, 'Introducción', in M. C. Tortti (ed.), *El lugar de la 'nueva izquierda' en la historia reciente*, special dossier in *Pol-His* 5, 10 (2012), pp. 107–9. For a first survey of Southern Cone 'New Left' activism containing a serious discussion of the concept of 'New Left' in the Latin American context, see Eu. Palieraki, 'La "nouvelle gauche" du Cône Sud. Des gauches plurielles à la recherche d'un nouveau modèle', in S. Boisard, C. González, and Eu. Palieraki, *Mobilisations sociales et effervescences révolutionnaires dans le Cône Sud (1964–1976)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015), pp. 121–201. But see also A. Marchesi, *Latin America's Radical Left* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), which is rich in empirical detail, though less directly concerned with questions of definitions and categories of analysis.

⁷¹ European New Left activists, as suggested earlier in this chapter, also radicalized under the influence of Third World revolts, but this manifested itself above all via solidarity networks – similar to US-American 'Hands off Cuba' committees – rather than direct involvement.

For obvious reasons, the events of 1956 alluded to earlier, which shook up the conscience of Europe's non-dogmatic left, played only minor roles in the genesis of the New or Radical Left in Latin America. Yet the chronology of the move towards the creation of a New Left is remarkably similar. The founding moments in the Southern Cone occurred in 1955 (Argentina), 1957 (Chile), and 1959 (Uruguay).⁷² And what then happened in Southern Cone states largely paralleled the trajectory of the European New Left. A sudden wave of radicalization gripped the pre-existing mass organizations of the left which, as in Europe, consisted mostly of Second and Third International socialist and communist parties. In some cases the socialist or communist parties as such underwent a major shift to the left which brought some Old Left organizations in a more or less lasting manner into the orbit of the New Left.⁷³ At any rate, the Latin American New Left, just as in Europe, evolved out of the Old Left in one way or another.

Likewise, again just like in Europe, other radical political currents predating the 1950s often played singularly crucial roles in stimulating the birth and development of the New Left. Eugenia Palieraki has reconstructed the crucial role played by Chilean Trotskyism in the founding and strengthening of the quintessential Chilean organization of the New Left, the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) in 1960s Chile.⁷⁴ Vera Carnovale does the same for the central role of Trotskyism as one of two major currents responsible for the creation and growth of the Argentine PRT-ERP.⁷⁵ Left Catholicism served as an indispensable inspiration and motivation to construct organizations of the New Left in Latin America, perhaps even more so than in Europe. Again, Palieraki is, plainly speaking, excellent at showcasing the all-important role of a key figure in Chilean radical Catholic politics in the twentieth century, Clotario Blest, in the genesis of the Chilean New Left in

72 For this comparative periodization, I follow Palieraki, 'La "nouvelle gauche" dans le Cône Sud', pp. 125–6.

73 For the case of Argentina, see C. Tortti, *El 'viejo Partido Socialista' y los orígenes de la 'nueva' izquierda, 1955–1965* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009); and for Uruguay G. Leibner, *Camaradas y compañeros. Una historia política y social de los comunistas del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Trilce, 2011).

74 Eu. Palieraki, 'Le Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) dans le Chili des années 1960. Histoire critique de la "nouvelle gauche" latino-américaine', PhD dissertation, Université de Paris 1/Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2009, 2 vols., pp. 109–47. All ensuing references are to the original dissertation, rather than the abridged book publication, Eu. Palieraki, *¡La revolución ya viene! El MIR chileno en los años sesenta* (Santiago: LOM, 2014).

75 V. Carnovale, *Los combatientes. Historia del PRT-ERP* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2011).

general and the MIR in particular.⁷⁶ The Chilean Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario (MAPU), another star in the firmament of Chilean left-wing movements, was at its point of origin a left Catholic youth organization.⁷⁷ The Argentine Montoneros, one of two major Argentine organizations eventually opting for armed struggle, the radical Peronist component of the Argentine New Left, recruited massively from Argentina's vibrant left Catholic milieu.⁷⁸

Latin America, too, witnessed the virtuous interaction of cultural non-conformity mutating into new political challenges along lines roughly equivalent to what I suggested earlier for western Europe. A path-breaking description of the crucial role of counter-cultural movements in the fashioning of the New Left is Vania Markanian's remarkable study on Uruguay in 1968, whose subtitle gives away its content: 'From Global Counterculture to Molotov Cocktails'.⁷⁹ One of the points of attraction that transformed, as hinted at above, the Uruguayan Communist Party into an unlikely laboratory of new experiments on various fronts was the organization's opening towards youth culture in the course of the 1960s.⁸⁰ A similar creative interaction between non-traditional youth cultures and politics could likewise be noted in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil.⁸¹

As in Europe and North America, all of the aforementioned groups initially showcased an ideological pluralism and correspondingly flexible modes of operation. Within the PRT-ERP, for instance, at its origins in the mid-1960s, when heterodox radical nationalism and Trotskyist currents merged to form the PRT, activists from both traditions 'dipped from all available sources that appeared to be useful, intending to construct an ecumenical synthesis out of

76 Palieraki, 'Le MIR', pp. 79–109.

77 C. M. Barahona, *MAPU o la seducción del poder y la juventud. Los años fundacionales del partido-mito de nuestra transición (1969–1973)* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2009).

78 L. M. Donatello, *Catolicismo y Montoneros. Religión, política y desencanto* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2010); E. Campos, *Cristianismo y revolución. El origen del Montoneros* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2016).

79 V. Markanian, *Uruguay 1968: From Global Counterculture to Molotov Cocktails* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

80 See the chapter titled 'Affiliate y baila' ('Join Up and Dance') in Leibner, *Camaradas y compañeros*, pp. 300–27.

81 V. Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality from Perón to Videla* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); P. Barr-Melej, *Psychedelic Chile: Youth, Counterculture, and Politics on the Road to Socialism and Dictatorship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); C. Dunn, *Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

the contributions of various Marxist currents'.⁸² Similar accounts are legion in the early years of most New Left groupings up to the late 1960s. It is crucial, however, to point to a rapid change in atmosphere and orientation from the late 1960s onwards.

In case study after case study, a sea-change from open embrace of internal diversity towards hypercentralization and (often) authoritarianism has been noted for the Southern Cone Radical Left, similar to a rapid mood change affecting the west European and North American New Left at the very same time.⁸³ 'The PRT-ERP, whose roots were based on the intention to fuse nationalism with Trotskyism and then to incorporate the most diverse contributions of other Marxist schools of thought, soon put aside this heterodoxy to move closer and closer towards a version of Stalinism mediated by the Vietnamese and Cubans.'⁸⁴ The Chilean MAPU, founded in 1969, initially understood its role as being to serve as a catalyst for unity on the left, encouraging diversity and non-hierarchical structures. 'By 1970, however, the dominant point of view became the necessity to convert the movement into a party. The control of the new [party] apparatus now was located in the hands of the faction headed by [the hardline Rodrigo] Ambrosio.'⁸⁵

For the Chilean MIR, 1969 became the year when internal democracy was replaced by open intrigue and centralization, the occasion being the expulsion of the hitherto crucial Trotskyist current 'in a most vulgar Stalinist manner', to cite Sergio Zorrilla, at that time a supporter of the victorious faction, from an interview thirty-five years later.⁸⁶ Palieraki then continues in her own words: 'A new model of party-building emerged, focusing on the ideal of unanimity. The new leadership believed that the elimination of disagreements would permit the party to fully embark on its path to its goal, the socialist revolution.' Within the MIR, there was no more space for internal debates. The MIR was to 'become homogeneous and close-knit. There could henceforth only exist one single line with which it [the MIR] will confront and emerge victorious over its enemies to the left and to the right.'⁸⁷

Aldo Marchesi has recently provided a generalization of such insights, certainly for Southern Cone movements. Marchesi recognizes the original

82 P. Pozzi, *Por las sendas argentinas. El PRT-ERP, la guerrilla marxista* (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2004), p. 89.

83 For the United States, see the informative M. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002).

84 Pozzi, *El PRT-ERP*, p. 89. 85 Moyano, *MAPU*, p. 115.

86 Palieraki, 'Le MIR', p. 683 n. 339. 87 *Ibid.*, p. 686.

pluralism and democratic instincts at work in what he terms Southern Cone 'radical political culture': 'Multiple identities coexisted through the [initial] period, and there were many "imagined communities" with respect to which the activists developed a sense of belonging.'⁸⁸ Marchesi postulates a general trend amongst the Southern Cone New Left movements: 'Many of these groups went through a first period marked by an attempt to build an alternative to the traditional Left, and a second period in which they returned to certain practices and discourses that were typical of what they had initially set out to combat.'⁸⁹ 'Most of these groups evolved from movements into parties, a process in which the early pluralism gave way to increasing homogenization, shaped by ideological concerns. In the transition into Leninist parties, these groups developed increasingly centralized structures, with fewer spaces for democratic discussion of ideas.'⁹⁰ 'None of the leftist organizations would have the same notion of activism in 1975 as they had in 1968.'⁹¹

Reasons for the Shift from New to Far Left

What remains to be addressed is the reasons for the return to the presumed certainties of Leninism by Southern Cone New Left activists in the wake of 1968. The failure of May '68 in Europe was experienced far less intensively in the Southern Cone than in Europe – for obvious reasons. And there was no concurrent similar defeat in Southern Cone Latin America. Some of the most astute historians of this period point to another factor. In her remarkable reconstruction of the inner life of the poster child of the post-1968 Radical Left in Latin America and Europe, the Chilean MIR, Palieraki points to the crucial role of the turn to armed struggle as the root cause of the sudden hypercentralization of the MIR: 'It was the recognition of the centrality of armed struggle which made party cadres and activists judge and accept the choices of the young [new] party leadership, including the expulsions and the concentration of all power into the hands of the group headed by Miguel Enríquez.'⁹² 'The turn towards clandestinity of the MIR was an internal coup by the MIR's national leadership, which accompanied the removal of any and all divergent currents. The accompanying internal rearrangements and the

88 A. Marchesi, 'Revolutionaries without Revolution: Regional Experiences in the Forging of a Radical Political Culture in the Southern Cone of South America (1966–1976)', in K. A. Young (ed.), *Making the Revolution: Histories of the Latin American Left* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 189.

89 Ibid., p. 194. 90 Ibid., pp. 195–6. 91 Ibid., p. 200. 92 Palieraki, 'Le MIR', p. 685.

new norms which governed activism by members of the MIR were imposed by the leadership without consultations or explanations.⁹³

Aldo Marchesi explains the Leninist turn like this:

These changes were connected with, and justified by, the decision to go underground which objectively limited the possibilities for democratic debate ... As military repression escalated in magnitude and intensity, these groups tended to retreat into themselves, became more hostile to internal differences, and emphasized the role played by ideology in shaping activists in the face of adverse situations. Ideology became a panacea that would solve all the problems they faced. When many of these organizations suffered major defeats, the leading explanation given was their poor understanding of Marxism–Leninism. The solution proffered was to focus more intently on studying this theory, which they believed had the capacity to shed light on reality.⁹⁴

The link between the turn to armed struggle and the clampdown on internal democracy seems logical and persuasive; but what triggered this switch to begin with? Aldo Marchesi makes clear that the repressive tactics of state practices occurred in a timeline stretching from late 1968 (Brazil) via 1972 (Uruguay) and 1973 (Chile) to 1975/6 (Argentina). Armed struggle was thus no mere response to the actions by repressive states and their military apparatuses. Something else may thus have triggered a systemic change within the New Left – but what? Moreover, Eugenia Palieraki is to the point when repeatedly reminding her readers that the choice to take up arms was by no means the preferred option for all battalions of the Radical Left. Palieraki points to several important political experiences that clearly highlight the existence of major sections of the Radical Left in Latin America after 1968 which were simultaneously ‘revolutionary, “New” – and unarmed’.⁹⁵

The reasons for the turn to authoritarian and hierarchical models of party-building by the small army of erstwhile activists of the New Left thus still have to be satisfactorily explained. Yet the reality of such a systemic switch from New Left to Far Left organizational principles in 1968–70 has been established beyond reasonable doubt for Europe, North America, and Latin

93 Ibid., p. 766. 94 Marchesi, ‘Revolutionaries without Revolution’, p. 196.

95 Palieraki, ‘La “nouvelle gauche” du Cône Sud’, p. 189 (emphasis added). The tendency to identify the New Left with support for armed struggle tactics mars the otherwise stimulating and imaginative volume by A. M. Álvarez and E. R. Tristán (eds.), *Revolutionary Violence and the New Left: Transnational Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

America.⁹⁶ A phenomenon that transcended continents and major political systems had come to an end. The New Left, which had captured the imagination of several generations of activists in many parts of the world, had become part of history.

Further Reading

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96 The peculiarities of Stalinist repression of all forms of dissent in eastern Europe after 1968 prevented movements east of the Iron Curtain from following this trend. Japan, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, marched to its own drummer.

PART II



TRANSVERSAL PERSPECTIVES

Socialism and Colonialism

REINHART KÖSSLER

Modern socialism and modern colonialism are co-eval products of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries – a period of transition that in the West saw the formation of new political ideas and social theory, socialism among them. It was also a watershed for the West's periphery. Emancipatory movements swept the American empires of Britain and Spain. Slavery in Haiti was overthrown in a revolution claiming universal human rights. The newly formed states in America spawned settlement projects of continental dimensions, epitomized in the US idea of Manifest Destiny, radicalized settler colonialism. British colonial conquest reached to India, southern Africa, and Australia; from the 1830s, France resumed expansion into Africa, beginning in Algeria.

Socialism and colonialism were intertwined in a threefold manner: political challenges that sprang from the domestic consequences of colonialism; emigration and the travelling of ideas and practices; and the spread and reflection of metropolitan socialism amongst the colonized. Further, the continuous expansion of the sphere of capital implied a challenge to address not only domestic issues largely couched in 'labour', but also the wider, global field.

How, if at all, were these linkages reflected in socialist thought and politics? I shall map responses from the nineteenth century onward and then explore exemplary approaches to colonial questions. This focus on ambivalences and breaking points that have informed various socialist, as well as anarchist, positionings on colonial issues allows only side glances at the separate issue of imperialism as well as at a host of social movements. The settlement of ostensibly unoccupied lands emerges as a central problem.

Early Departures

For nascent socialism, settlement was pivotal. British labour activists were transported to settler colonies such as Australia, and French revolutionaries

to Cayenne, Algeria, and New Caledonia. Labour organizations debated emigration to take pressure off the labour market, linking up with the most radical and brutal form of colonialism, settler colonialism with its genocidal quest for the elimination of indigenous people. Moreover, for settlements where communists and socialists hoped to put their ideas into practice, preferred sites were in the spaces opened up for European settlement in northern America. Such colonies subsided when ‘the communist movement moved from a sectarian to a party movement’.¹ However, the linkage between colonial settlement and progressive, rationalist projects had been well established, especially from the onset of French conquest and colonization of Algeria in 1830. Here, ‘military’, penal, and ‘civil’ colonization were closely intertwined and advocated by Saint-Simonians,² to be taken up by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.³ Young Friedrich Engels welcomed the surrender of Algerian national hero Abdelkader in 1847, since ‘the modern bourgeois, with civilisation, industry, order and at least relative enlightenment following him, is preferable to the feudal lord or the marauding robber’.⁴ In contrast, Chartists critiqued colonialism, sometimes supporting colonial rebellions and retrenchment.⁵

From the 1848 revolution, labour struggles were intertwined with national ones. Thus, ‘though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle’.⁶ This applied to the ‘historic’ nations of Europe, and the United States of America – not ethnically bounded, but ‘large national bodies of undoubted vitality’.⁷ In contrast, ‘non-historic peoples’, particularly Slavs of central and south-eastern Europe, were to be absorbed into such states.⁸ Exceptions were made for the Poles and Irish who

1 K. Kautsky, ‘Auswanderung und Kolonisation’, *Die Neue Zeit* 1 (1883), pp. 365–70, 393–404 at p. 367.

2 P. Pilbeam, *Saint-Simonians in Nineteenth-Century France* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2014), pp. 156–72.

3 A. Zouache, ‘Proudhon et la question coloniale algérienne’, *Revue économique* 67 (2016), pp. 1231–44 at p. 1235.

4 F. Engels, ‘Extraordinary Revelations – Abd-El-Kader – Guizot’s Foreign Policy’, in *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010) (hereafter MECW), vol. vi, pp. 469–72 at p. 472.

5 G. Vargo, ‘“Outworks of the citadel of corruption”: the Chartist press reports the Empire’, *Victorian Studies* 54, 2 (2012), pp. 227–53.

6 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in MECW, vol. vi, pp. 477–517 at p. 495.

7 F. Engels, ‘What Have the Working Classes to Do with Poland?’, in MECW, vol. xx, pp. 152–61 at p. 156; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 30.

8 R. Rosdolsky, *Engels and the ‘Nonhistoric’ Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848*, trans. and Introduction J. P. Himka (London: Critique Books, 1986).

performed heroic struggles expected to subvert the sanctuaries of reaction – Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary – and the mainstay of capitalism, England. The decisive criterion was the strategic importance of these struggles for advancing the mission of the proletariat and, thus, the ultimate destiny of humankind.

Mikhail Bakunin, however, siding ‘with all revolutions, whether they pursued democracy, socialism or independence for oppressed nationalities’,⁹ advocated national rights for the Slavs of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Not specifically addressing colonialism, he later insisted on ‘the complete and real emancipation of the entire proletariat, not only of some countries, but of all nations, civilized and uncivilized’.¹⁰ Bakunin cast Slavs as the most dejected nations, thus destined for the salvation of humankind.¹¹

Marx held, against the destruction of colonial occupation in India, that this meant ‘the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia’ – a precondition for ‘mankind’ to ‘fulfil its destiny’.¹² This destiny was epitomized in the categorical imperative that ‘the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means’.¹³ Concretely, colonial rule would create the conditions of its own undoing, a national and a ‘native army’ as ‘the first general centre of resistance’, which became effective in the ‘national revolt’ of 1857/8.¹⁴ Another concern pertained to the provincial situation¹⁵ of a European revolution that might ‘be crushed in this little corner of the earth, since the *movement* of bourgeois society is still in the *ascendant* over a far greater area’¹⁶

For Marx, capitalism was deeply implicated in colonialism: ‘the veiled slavery of the wage workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world’.¹⁷ Thus, transformation in the centre was linked inextricably to the subjection of the colonial sphere. Reflecting on

9 J.-C. Angaut, *La Liberté des peuples. Bakounine et les révolutions de 1848* (Lyon: Atelier de Création Libertaire, 2009), p. 33.

10 M. Bakounine, ‘Lettre à *La Liberté* (5. octobre 1872)’, in M. Bakounine, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. III (Leiden: Brill, 1965), p. 165.

11 M. Bakounine, ‘Principes fondamentaux de la nouvelle politique slave’ (1848), in Angaut, *Liberté des peuples*, p. 92.

12 K. Marx, ‘The British Rule in India’, in MECW, vol. XII, pp. 125–33 at p. 132.

13 ‘Provisional Rules of the [International Working Men’s] Association’, in MECW, vol. XX, pp. 14–16 at p. 14.

14 K. Marx, ‘The Revolt in the Indian Army’, in MECW, vol. XV, pp. 297–300 at pp. 297–8;

K. Marx, ‘Indian News’, in MECW, vol. XV, pp. 314–17 at p. 316.

15 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

16 K. Marx to F. Engels, 8 October 1858, in MECW, vol. XI, p. 347.

17 K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, in MECW, vol. XXXV, p. 747.

the changes across the middle of the nineteenth century, Engels noted a trajectory where 'all other countries were to become for England what Ireland already was – markets for her manufactured goods, supplying her in return with raw materials and food. England the great manufacturing centre of an agricultural world, with an ever-increasing number of corn- and cotton-growing Irelands, revolving around her, the industrial sun.'¹⁸

Such connections beckoned the question of the colonies' destiny. Some Chartists had demanded that the benefits of empire should be shared equally.¹⁹ Later, Engels expected independence for 'the actual colonies, i.e., the countries occupied by European settlers . . . on the other hand, countries that are merely ruled and are inhabited by natives, such as India, Algeria, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions' were to be 'temporarily taken over by the proletariat and guided as rapidly as possible to independence'. Revolutions in India, Algeria, or Egypt 'would certainly suit *us* best'.²⁰ Again, the West was cast as the decisive arena, while colonies were to follow.

The Settling of 'New' Lands

The modernizing gaze fell in particular on 'actual colonies'. French settlement in Algeria was considered widely as a progressive project. Chartist criticism of British overseas expansion found limits 'where numbers of working-class British emigrants encountered native populations'²¹ – the classical constellation in settler colonies where indigenous lands were systematically appropriated.²²

Such settlement was directed towards supposedly open spaces mainly in North America; indigenous peoples were ignored.²³ Marx considered as 'the essence of a free colony . . . that the bulk of the soil is still public property, and every settler on it therefore can turn part of it into his private property and individual means of production'. In the absence of wage labour, this would be the 'direct antithesis' to the 'capitalist régime'.²⁴ Accordingly, Engels

18 F. Engels, 'England in 1845 and 1885', in *MECW*, vol. xxvi, pp. 295–301 at p. 296.

19 Vargo, "Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption", p. 243.

20 F. Engels to K. Kautsky, 12 September 1882, in *MECW*, vol. xlvii, p. 323.

21 Vargo, "Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption", p. 242.

22 A. Fitzmaurice, 'Anticolonialism in Western Political Thought: The Colonial Origins of the Concept of Genocide', in A. D. Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony and Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 55–80.

23 K. Marx, Letter to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, in *MECW*, vol. xx, p. 19.

24 *Capital*, vol. i, pp. 755, 752; see Marx, Letter to Abraham Lincoln, p. 19.

called for 'allocat[ing] property . . . to small farmers themselves to cultivate' in Eritrea, an Italian colony, invoking the proviso of 'terra libera',²⁵ or 'no man's land'. Anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus distinguished 'conquest' from legitimate 'colonization', where 'proletarian populations . . . installed themselves on land to cultivate it'.²⁶ Elsewhere, he voiced pioneering criticism of colonialism amongst socialists and anarchists; still, Reclus was fascinated by Russia's advance into Siberia and the Far East,²⁷ resonating with the sentiments of Peter Kropotkin, who had been a pioneer on the Amur.²⁸

Large-scale overseas settlement under the constraints of population pressure in industrializing Europe was thus presented as a positive and progressive occurrence, especially where it promoted 'liberty' or the setting down of self-producing farmers. Such views were linked to overarching, universalist ideas of perfectibility, which were common ground for nineteenth-century radicals.

Challenges of Colonialism and Colonial Policy

Just prior to the commencement of German colonialism in 1884, the orientation of German social democracy (SPD), our exemplary case, experienced a controversy over a bill to subsidize steamers for overseas services which epitomized future debate. Supporters argued with job creation, the opening of markets, and the civilizing effects of trade. Opponents feared expansionary tendencies, international rivalry, and costs; colonial markets appeared as the 'last hope' of capitalism to fend off crisis and revolutionary change.²⁹

Colonial Reformism

Meanwhile, the meaning of 'colonization' shifted away from overseas settlement; to anarchist Jean Grave it meant 'to seize [the] land [of distant

25 F. Engels to P. Martignetti, 30 March 1890, in *MECW*, vol. XLVIII, p. 464.

26 P. Pelletier, *Albert Camus, Elisée Reclus et l'Algérie. Les 'indigènes et l'univers'* (Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu, 2015), pp. 41, 51–2.

27 Reclus, *L'Homme et la terre*, vol. v (Paris: Librairie Universelle, 1905), pp. 503–9.

28 P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Dover, 1971), pp. 184–223.

29 [K. Kautsky], 'Tongking', *Die Neue Zeit* 2 (1884), pp. 156–64 at p. 163; see H.-C. Schröder, *Sozialismus und Imperialismus. Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit dem Imperialismusproblem und der 'Weltpolitik' vor 1914* (Hanover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1968), pp. 125–33.

populations], to place them completely under an exploitative regime'.³⁰ In stark contrast, Eduard Bernstein linked revisionism to colonialism's role in overcoming capitalism's systemic crises.³¹ With a revolutionary road to socialism thus blocked, a strictly reformist agenda included colonies. Further, 'the subjection of the natives' meant 'that today, the savages are, under European rule domestically controlled, universally better off than before'.³²

On the basis of legitimate claims of higher cultures over lower ones, 'we shall denounce and oppose certain methods of subjecting savages, but not the subjecting of savages as such and upholding the rights of higher culture against them'.³³ This resonated with Proudhon's claim of a natural right of force which obliged a 'civilized race' to use its power for educating the 'lower race'.³⁴ While Bernstein adhered to free trade, others went further and called for protective tariffs and a colonial sphere that would advance autarchy.³⁵ Accordingly, they supported the navy programme.

Colonialism was hotly debated at the Second International's 1907 Stuttgart Congress. The Dutch socialist Henri van Kol championed colonial reformism, insisting that colonies needed to pass a capitalist stage, and reformism would 'ease the . . . transition from feudalism to the modern state, through capitalism to socialism'. He also pointed to the 'trust of millions of Javanese' the Dutch socialists had earned and claimed that the 'natives' lack of 'needs' made them unfit for putting up serious resistance against 'most inhuman' exploitation.³⁶ Similarly, 'imperial trusteeship' would guide the British Labour Party up to 1945–51.³⁷ In Stuttgart, the radical critics of colonialism prevailed, mainly by votes from southern and eastern Europe, whereas reformists drew support from delegates of colonizing countries.³⁸

30 J. Grave, *La Colonisation* (Paris: Temps Nouveaux, 1900), pp. 5–6.

31 E. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation*, trans. E. C. Harvey (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1909), p. 178.

32 E. Bernstein, 'Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft', *Die Neue Zeit* 16 (1898), pp. 484–97 at p. 492.

33 E. Bernstein, 'Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die türkischen Wirren', *Die Neue Zeit* 15 (1897), pp. 108–16 at p. 109.

34 Quoted in Zouache, 'Proudhon', p. 1240.

35 M. Hyrkkänen, *Sozialistische Kolonialpolitik. Eduard Bernsteins Stellung zur Kolonialpolitik und zum Imperialismus 1882–1914. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Revisionismus* (Helsinki: SHS, 1986), pp. 268–9.

36 *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Stuttgart, 18. bis 24. August 1907* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1907), pp. 36–7.

37 See John Callaghan, Chapter 4, this volume.

38 *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress*, p. 38.

Colonial Wars and Their Metropolitan Echo

Colonial scandals and serial wars were castigated in the Reichstag, above all by the SPD. In the first Reichstag debate on the 'Namibian War'³⁹ in then German Southwest Africa (1903–8), which soon turned into genocide, August Bebel, in January 1904, decried 'a world turned upside down: in truth, the Hereros defend their native land . . .'⁴⁰ Claiming scanty information and a need to safeguard German settlers, the SPD faction abstained from the vote on the requested funds, to oppose funding the war on later occasions. This abstention was critiqued hotly in local party associations⁴¹ and at the following party congress. Here, Georg Ledebour stressed the need to protect 'endangered settlers' (*Ansiedler*), arguing that 'once the German Empire has occupied these territories, it has also incurred certain obligations, amongst them the protection of life', that is, the life of settlers; Africans were not considered.⁴²

The SPD objected to colonialism on account of the heavy cost of the colonies, particularly of the wars, the little worth of the colonies Germany had acquired, and increasingly also the increased danger of war arising from colonial rivalry, such as the Morocco crises of 1905 and 1911. The growing critique of militarism, 'marinism', and imperialism dovetailed such arguments.

Entanglements between colonial expansion and domestic politics came to a head in Germany with the snap election of 1907, again triggered by controversy about funding the war in Namibia. The SPD campaigned on indictments against colonial scandals; the worthlessness of the colonies and the financial burden, coupled with corruption⁴³ and the fattening of a few privileged individuals and companies,⁴⁴ demanding a huge military effort.⁴⁵ Ordinary workers got involved, for whom 'German colonial policy became an important political issue',⁴⁶ and such interest was reflected in local campaigning against colonialism.⁴⁷ Besides 'humanistic accusations',⁴⁸ criticism

39 M. Wallace, *A History of Namibia from the Beginning to 1990* (London: Hurst, 2011), p. 155.

40 A. Bebel in *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstages*, II. Legislaturperiode, 14 January 1904, p. 368.

41 *Vorwärts*, 2 February 1904; 9 February 1904; 14 February 1904; 28 July 1904; 24 August 1904; 28 August 1904; also Schröder, *Sozialismus*, pp. 186–7.

42 *Vorwärts*, 21 September 1904. 43 *Vorwärts*, 1 January 1907; 6 January 1907.

44 *Vorwärts*, 3 January 1907. 45 *Vorwärts*, 8 January 1907.

46 O. Sobich, 'Schwarze Bestien, rote Gefahr'. *Rassismus und Antisozialismus im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2006), p. 213.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 215–19; J. Short, 'Colonialism, War and the German Working Class: Popular Mobilization in the 1907 Reichstag Elections', in B. Naranch and G. Eley (eds.), *German Colonialism in a Global Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 210–27.

48 Sobich, 'Schwarze Bestien, Rote Gefahr', p. 298.

focused on excesses and cost, not on colonial policy per se. An avalanche of 'nationalist and racist' propaganda⁴⁹ and a realignment of the right led to heavy SPD losses in terms of Reichstag seats, though not in the popular vote.

Debates on Imperialism

Implicitly, social democratic objections to the colonial regime concerned profits from the colonies. Along with some of their British colleagues,⁵⁰ the SPD majority saw particularistic interests at work, while for the overall economy, colonialism was wasteful; to reformists, colonies ensured autarchy; and the revisionists felt that colonialism would cushion economic crisis. Such ideas turned into arguments that parts of the metropolitan working class had been co-opted using colonial resources. Similar views had been presaged by Engels,⁵¹ and were reflected in Bolshevik efforts to explain the Second International's failure in the First World War by reference to a 'labour aristocracy' that had been 'bribed' by proceeds from the colonies.⁵² The argument touches basic issues of the Marxian theory of wages and value,⁵³ thus resisting easy operationalization. Nevertheless, during the interwar years, the hypothetical loss of the colonies was calculated as a grave detriment by Dutch socialists,⁵⁴ and, conversely, wage disparities between metropole and colony were identified as the main reasons for imperial instability.⁵⁵

These arguments hardly addressed the process of colonization – Hilferding,⁵⁶ and subsequently Lenin⁵⁷ or Bukharin,⁵⁸ were concerned with

49 Ibid., p. 248.

50 S. Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 31–7; J. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Nisbet, 1902).

51 F. Engels to K. Kautsky, 12 September 1882, in MECW, vol. XLVI, p. 323.

52 See E. Hobsbawm, 'Lenin and the "Aristocracy of Labor"', *Monthly Review* 21, 11 (1970), pp. 47–56.

53 See F. Sternberg, *Der Imperialismus* (Berlin: Malik, 1926), ch. 2; R. Kößler and H. Wienold, 'Der Wert in der Warengesellschaft. Gedankending oder Realabstraktion', in U. H. Bittlingmayer, A. Demirović, and T. Freytag (eds.), *Handbuch Kritische Theorie* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), pp. 909–51.

54 *Verslag van het koloniaal congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland, gehouden op zaterdag 11 en zondag 12 januari 1930 te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: N. V. De Arbeiderspers, 1930), pp. 13–14; thanks to M. van der Linden for this reference.

55 G. Orwell, 'Not Counting Niggers' (1939), in G. Orwell, *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968 [1939]), p. 397.

56 R. Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981 [1910]).

57 V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960), vol. XXI.

58 N. Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1929).

changes in the organization of capitalism. However, Rosa Luxemburg detailed colonialism's consequences for the colonized,⁵⁹ an approach Lenin ridiculed for sentimentalism.⁶⁰ Luxemburg's interest was driven by her main contention of a necessity for capitalism to expand into non-capitalist spheres. Theories of imperialism converged in stressing the link between colonialism, militarism/marinism, and the looming danger of war.⁶¹ Also for French socialists, concern about the approaching war overshadowed issues of colonialism.⁶²

Social democrats differed greatly on the future perspectives of colonialism. After Stuttgart, Karl Kautsky set as 'our aim' 'to relinquish the colonies, to let free the nations who inhabit them',⁶³ echoing earlier pronouncements by Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht.⁶⁴ Like Bernstein, but also Engels, Kautsky saw settlement colonies as an achievement of civilization; he only rejected what he considered to be mere exploitation. Again, the Belgian socialist Emile Vandervelde remarked that 'to exploit the natives, one needs to keep them alive; but to expropriate them and take their place, the cheapest approach is – to exterminate them'.⁶⁵ This also related to recent experience such as in Namibia. Still, for Vandervelde, European settlement had overcome the underuse of land by 'savages'.⁶⁶ In a statement quoted by both Kautsky and Vandervelde, Bebel had considered the pursuit of colonialism 'not a crime as such' as long as colonizers acted as 'liberators and educators', 'work mates and allies'. This was not the case with German colonial policy.⁶⁷ The learned anarchist Reclus exposed more poignantly the ideology of the 'civilizing mission';⁶⁸ his comrade Grave denounced colonization as brutal, forceful theft⁶⁹ and justified colonial revolts.⁷⁰ However, Grave, just like

59 R. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951 [1913]), pp. 368–445.

60 V. I. Lenin, 'Zamechaniia V. I. Lenina na knigu R. Liuksemburg "Nakoplenie kapitala"' ['Remarks of V. I. Lenin on R. Luxemburg's Book "The Accumulation of Capital"'], in *Leninskii sbornik* [Lenin Miscellany], vol. XXII (Moscow: Partiinoe Izdatel'stvo, 1933), pp. 36, 84.

61 See also K. Kautsky, *Sozialismus und Kolonialpolitik* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1907), p. 16; K. Radek, 'Der deutsche Imperialismus und die Arbeiterklasse', in K. Radek, *In den Reihen der deutschen Revolution 1909–1919* (Munich: Karl Wolff, 1921), pp. 93, 135.

62 B. Shaev, 'The Algerian war, European integration, and the decolonization of French socialism', *French Historical Studies* 41, 1 (2018), pp. 63–94 at p. 67.

63 Kautsky, *Kolonialpolitik*, p. 45.

64 Schröder, *Sozialismus*, p. 147.

65 E. Vandervelde, 'Die Sozialdemokratie und das Kolonialproblem (Die belgischen Sozialisten und die Kongofrage)', *Die Neue Zeit* 27 (1909), pp. 732–9, 828–37 at p. 733.

66 Ibid., p. 736.

67 Bebel in *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstages*, II. Legislaturperiode, 1 December 1906, pp. 4057–8.

68 Reclus, *L'Homme et la terre*, vol. V, p. 264.

69 Grave, *Colonisation*, p. 6.

70 J. Grave, *Moribund Society and Anarchism* (San Francisco: A. Isaack, 1899), p. 98.

Bebel, painted a 'sensitive' alternative, to 'adapt them [the colonized] to our civilisation'.⁷¹ The vantage point of propagating civilization and of the perfectability of the human condition was thus maintained. The colonized were objects – of suppression or, possibly, education.

In Rosa Luxemburg's view, then, 'for primitive societies . . . there can be no other attitude than opposition and fight to the finish – complete exhaustion or extinction'.⁷² For different reasons, Kautsky rejected any idea that the 'external' adversaries of colonialism might become allies of the metropolitan proletariat.⁷³ One can gauge some helplessness regarding anti-colonial resistance from the appearance of the Indian 'comrade Kumar' at the Stuttgart Congress: to great applause, she entered a strong plea for 'human rights, autonomy . . . our right to self-determination', but added, 'you cannot do anything in India' and the relevant resolution was set aside on procedural grounds.⁷⁴

Concurrently, Henry Hyndman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain, supported publications of Indian anarchist 'propagandists of the deed'.⁷⁵ This reflected an almost global diffusion of "'propaganda by the deed" and the practice of revolutionary terrorism', when anarchists migrated *inter alia* to Egypt or South Africa, or linked up with Indian resistance fighters,⁷⁶ pursuing syncretistic concepts that merged Russian populism, Western anarchism, and Indian classics.⁷⁷ Almost by definition, anarchists stood 'in opposition to imperial domination and oppression',⁷⁸ but in a colonial situation, such a stance easily translated into nationalism. This implied a projected state, and states were anathema to anarchists.⁷⁹

⁷¹ Grave, *Colonisation*, p. 13. ⁷² Luxemburg, *Accumulation*, p. 371.

⁷³ K. Kautsky, *Der Weg zur Macht. Politische Betrachtungen über das Hineinwachsen in die Revolution* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1909), p. 103.

⁷⁴ *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongreß*, p. 38.

⁷⁵ M. Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), pp. 45, 56.

⁷⁶ O. Laursen, 'Anti-Imperialism', in C. Levy and M. Adams (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 149–68 at p. 155; see A. Gorman, "'Diverse in Race, Religion and Nationality . . . but United in Aspirations of Civil Progress": The Anarchist Movement in Egypt 1860–1940', pp. 3–31; L. van der Walt, 'Revolutionary Syndicalism, Communism and the National Question in South African Socialism', pp. 33–94, both in S. Hirsch and L. van der Walt (eds.), *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1879–1940* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁷⁷ Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism*, pp. 72–7. ⁷⁸ Laursen, 'Anti-Imperialism', p. 149.

⁷⁹ K. Zimmer, 'At War with Empire: The Anti-Colonial Roots of American Anarchist Debates during the First World War', in M. Adams and R. Kinna (eds.), *Anarchism 1914–1918: Internationalism, Militarism, and War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 175–98 at p. 176; Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism*, pp. 118–22.

During the First World War, left-wing socialists began to link the watchword 'Out of the colonies!' with a potential direct alliance between 'the colonial proletariat . . . and the European, fighting for socialism'.⁸⁰ Again, Luxemburg and Lenin debated hotly the right to national self-determination. Eventually, this demand proved a highly effective mobilizing tool for Bolsheviks after 1917 and translated into Comintern strategy for the colonies.⁸¹ Further, taken up in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, self-determination became a central watchword in the struggles for independence in the colonial world.

In stark contrast, reformists within the SPD increasingly accepted colonies as a necessary condition for the wellbeing of the metropolitan proletariat,⁸² and projected a 'virtually unlimited future' for colonial rule.⁸³ Adherents of the war effort, representing the majority of the social democratic leadership and parliamentary party, adamantly demanded that occupied German colonies be returned, in the interest of the working class,⁸⁴ pointing to the needs of German industry for raw material supplies, while 'free world trade' had turned out to be a pipe dream.⁸⁵ Max Cohen argued that 'striving for colonial possessions is one of the most pronounced features of great capitalist states',⁸⁶ which implied a projected expansion of German colonies in Africa,⁸⁷ but also the idea of collective rule over colonies, closer to former concepts of colonial reformism.⁸⁸ In any case, Gustav Noske assured his readers, 'the right to self-determination of nations is unsuitable for solving the African problem'.⁸⁹

After Germany's defeat, such sentiments turned into protest against the 'rape of a people', as the refusal to 'return the occupied German colonies' was

80 K. Radek, 'Thesen der *Gazeta Robotnicza* über Imperialismus und nationale Unterdrückung', *Der Vorbote* 2 (1916); reprint in V. I. Lenin, *Sämtliche Werke* (Vienna: Verlag für Literatur und Politik, 1930), vol. XIX, p. 530.

81 E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); R. Schlesinger, *Die Kolonialfrage in der Kommunistischen Internationale* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1970), pp. 30–2.

82 See, for example, L. Quessel, 'Kolonialpolitik und Seegeltung. Nicht oder sondern und', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 20 (1916), pp. 1145–51.

83 H.-C. Schröder, *Gustav Noske und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Kaiserreichs* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1979), p. 56.

84 G. Noske, 'Kolonialpolitik nach dem Kriege', *Die Neue Zeit* 36, 1 (1916), pp. 481–8 at p. 484.

85 W. Jansson, 'Arbeiterklasse und Kolonialpolitik', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 22 (1916), pp. 629–34.

86 M. Cohen, 'Die Notwendigkeit einer deutschen Kolonialzukunft', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 22 (1916), pp. 1247–53 at p. 1251.

87 M. Cohen, 'Die Notwendigkeit produktiver Kolonialpolitik', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 24 (1918), pp. 21–5.

88 Noske, 'Kolonialpolitik nach dem Kriege', p. 486. 89 Ibid., p. 487.

termed by the Majority SPD⁹⁰ delegation at the Workers' and Socialist Conference in Bern in February 1919.⁹¹ Accordingly, on 1 March 1919, the Majority SPD joined the huge majority in the National Assembly demanding restitution of the colonies, only the Independent SPD opposing.⁹² The rift that had opened amongst socialists on a national and international scale with the beginning of the war in 1914 was thus clearly articulated in relation to colonialism. Whereas the left, whose majority was soon organized in the Comintern, embarked on active alliance-building with anti-colonial resistance movements, colonial reformists insisted that a country like Germany had a legitimate claim and need for colonies, even though countenancing international supervision or joint administration.⁹³ Elsewhere, this approach was broadened into a call to enable all nations of 'continental Europe' to pursue 'overseas and colonial activities',⁹⁴ which came close to the ideas of an earlier memorandum of socialists from Entente countries that also eyed the internationalization particularly of central African colonies, along with reformist changes.⁹⁵

The trajectory of socialism, in particular, party politics, with relation to colonial issues, as demonstrated so far mainly using the German example, has shown basic contradictions. An overall perspective of the emancipation of humankind, as articulated, *inter alia*, in Marx's texts on India, stood against perceived day-to-day concerns of metropolitan workers, by and large the social basis of socialist parties. Particularly for reformists, once the focus was narrowed to the national economy, national interest in acquiring and maintaining a colonial sphere appeared to dovetail with such concerns. Criticism of a 'labour aristocracy' inverted this view. Moreover, in pre-First World War criticism of imperialism, the issues of war and militarism for most socialists took precedence over actual processes in the colonies. Lastly, the evaluation of 'settler colonies' as inherently progressive was common ground, except possibly on the radical Left.

90 After their split in 1916 over support for the war effort, there existed a 'majoritarian' and an 'independent' SPD. See also Stefan Berger and Thomas Welskopp, Chapter 1, this volume.

91 G. A. Ritter (ed.), *Die 11. Internationale 1918/1919* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1980), p. 803; on the Bern conference, see J. Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, vol. 11 (Hanover: J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1974), pp. 168–73.

92 Communists were not represented.

93 M. Schippel, 'Die Schicksalsstunde der deutschen Kolonien', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 25 (1919), pp. 137–43. M. Schippel, 'Sozialdemokratie, internationale und deutsche Kolonien', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 25 (1919), pp. 528–34.

94 J. Kaliski, 'Vorwort', in A. Mansfeld (ed.), *Sozialdemokratie und Kolonien* (Berlin: Verlag der Sozialistischen Monatshefte, 1919), p. 5.

95 'Memorandum der Sozialisten der Ententeländer über die Kriegsziele 111', *Sozialistische Auslandspolitik* 4, 32 (1918), pp. 6–7.

Socialism in the Settler Colony

In South Africa, typical conflicts in a settler society culminated in the infamous Rand Revolt in 1922. There had been efforts by syndicalists to mobilize workers across the colour line,⁹⁶ but in the post-war crisis, fierce competition between 'white' and African workers culminated in violent confrontation. This struggle, imbued with 'socialist ideas', reflected real grievances and incipient strides in working-class organization, besides racial segregationism.⁹⁷ For a fleeting moment, the fledgling Communist Party here supported, ostensibly for tactical reasons, the slogan, 'Workers of the world unite and fight for a white South Africa', that is, the colour bar against black workers. This was the prelude for the Pact Government, an alliance between the South African Labour Party and the Afrikaner Nationalists, which from 1924 systematized a 'civilized labour policy' – the foundations of much that was to coalesce into apartheid some twenty-five years later.⁹⁸ Radical opposition to this racist dispensation was left, aside from African nationalists, to the communists, who also absorbed much of the anarchist potential.

Internationalism and Citizenship

The rupture of the First World War marked the split in the socialist workers' movement. The Communist International was formed in 1919, its counterpart, the Labour and Socialist International, followed in 1923.⁹⁹ Here, in contradistinction to the Comintern, colonialism did not figure prominently. While colonial issues were to haunt socialists, particularly when they participated in governments of colonial powers, they were consistently shoved onto the back burner,¹⁰⁰ or taken up by smaller groups such as the International Labour Party (ILP) in Britain.¹⁰¹ The French party, significantly dubbed the 'French Section of the Workers' International' (SFIO), forms an exemplary case.

Involvement in government implied an exigency to safeguard the territorial status quo, including the colonies and the concerns of settlers particularly

96 Van der Walt, 'Revolutionary Syndicalism'.

97 W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 80–1.

98 R. Davenport and C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 5th edn (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 634–5.

99 Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, vol. 11, pp. 284–91. See also Reiner Tosstorff, Chapter 13, this volume.

100 See Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, pp. 41, 52. 101 Ibid., pp. 106–17.

in North Africa; relevant policies were persistently linked to the idea of a civilizing mission (*mission civilisatrice*), spreading the benefits of enlightenment. Basic tenets of colonial reformism coalesced in abortive attempts to extend French citizenship at least to parts of the colonized and thus to accommodate claims of emancipation and human rights with continued colonial occupation. Especially after the Second World War, these considerations merged with strong scepticism towards 'nationalism'. French governments, and with them the SFIO, met rising demands for independence with promises for an overarching 'union'.

Particularly in France, the socialist–communist split enhanced 'colonial socialism'.¹⁰² After the decisive Tours Congress of 1920, the remaining minority SFIO underwent complex reorientation.¹⁰³ Against communist advocacy of a pull-out and independence for the colonies, many French socialists insisted on concepts of internationalism in a Jaurèsian tradition; while not entirely ruled out, independence ought to be pursued by non-violent means. Yet socialists supported violent repression, such as in the Rif War in Morocco in 1924/5.¹⁰⁴ Following Jean Jaurès,¹⁰⁵ French socialists also aired the possibility of internationalizing colonies, within a federal and socialist united states of Europe, or at least of internationalizing the territories mandated under the League of Nations. Such planning was firmly pinned to European needs and objectives, sometimes dubbed 'Eurafrica'.¹⁰⁶ In reality, the exigencies of war, the post-war crisis, and the world economic crisis placed heavy burdens on the colonies.¹⁰⁷ In insisting on France's civilizing mission in the colonies, French socialists hoped to 'transform capitalist colonization into a lofty and brotherly work of human civilization'.¹⁰⁸ For Marius Moutet,¹⁰⁹ the envisaged expansion of citizenship implied a trajectory

102 C. Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c. 1950–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

103 E. Sibord, 'La Gauche et l'empire colonial avant 1945', in J.-J. Becker and G. Candar (eds.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 11, *xxe siècle. A l'épreuve de l'histoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), pp. 345–50.

104 D. Slavin, 'The French left and the Rif War, 1924–25: racism and the limits of internationalism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991), pp. 5–32 at pp. 13, 21.

105 A. Koulakssis, *Le parti socialiste et l'Afrique du Nord de Jaurès à Blum* (Paris: Armand Collin, 1991), p. 54.

106 Shaev, 'The Algerian War', pp. 67–9.

107 A. Diarra, *La Gauche française et l'Afrique subsaharienne. Colonisation, décolonisation, coopération (xixe–xxe siècles)* (Paris: Karthala, 2014), p. 23; Koulakssis, *Le Parti socialiste et l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 144.

108 *Le Populaire*, 19 May 1930, quoted in Koulakssis, *Le Parti socialiste et l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 231.

109 J. Lewis, 'The tragic career of Marius Moutet', *European History Quarterly* 38, 1 (2008), pp. 66–92 at p. 68.

of gradual assimilation, but evolutionist viewpoints cemented existing hierarchies. As Léon Blum declared:

We admit the right and even the duty of superior races to bring the same degree of culture to those who have not succeeded in achieving it, and to summon them to progress realized thanks to the achievements of science and industry.¹¹⁰

Independence was supplanted by assimilation. Accordingly, the Popular Front government under the premiership of Léon Blum proposed a bill to extend citizenship in Algeria to some 25,000 *évolués*. The bill spoke to hopes of reconciling 'Muslim' and 'French' identities, but was killed by stiff settler opposition¹¹¹ or, otherwise, by the indecisiveness of the Popular Front government.¹¹² More generally, this failure speaks to the pervasive 'indifference' vis-à-vis colonial issues noted among socialists during the interwar period,¹¹³ which meant giving such issues second place at best in relation to seemingly more pressing tasks.¹¹⁴

Largely the same approach of upholding republicanism and egalitarianism under French rule against independence was resumed after the Second World War. During the war France's African colonies had been of strategic importance, with French Equatorial Africa providing a foothold for de Gaulle's Free France. Subsequently, with the two wars in Indochina and Algeria, the 'colonial problem' emerged as 'the most important problem' faced by the French Fourth Republic.¹¹⁵

'A certain colonial working consensus' informed the approaches of French parties to the right of the communists,¹¹⁶ including the SFIO. The internationalist tradition of French socialists was invoked to motivate 'federal' solutions, also in an attempt to thwart any new rise of 'nationalism'. These concerns comprised both the idea of a European federation, to ensure future peace and not least, to hem in a reconstructed Germany; and the Union Française, to encompass both France and its colonies. The latter stance raised the issue of representation as well as complex challenges of social policy. However, the 'theoretical possibility . . . to be accepted into the category of citizen' became

110 *Journal Officiel de la Chambre des Députés*, 9 July 1925, pp. 3314–18, quoted in Slavin, 'The French left and the Rif War', p. 19.

111 H. Wilson, *African Decolonisation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), pp. 43–4.

112 Kaloukssis, *Le Parti socialiste et l'Afrique du Nord*, pp. 280–91.

113 Shaeff, 'The Algerian War', p. 67.

114 Kaloukssis, *Le Parti socialiste et l'Afrique du Nord*, pp. 203–45.

115 T. Smith, 'The French colonial consensus and people's war, 1946–1958', *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, 4 (1974), pp. 217–47 at p. 217.

116 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

a reality only for ‘very few Africans’¹¹⁷ in the sense of being entitled to the vote,¹¹⁸ and the socialist minister Moutet merely presided over the failure to advance suffrage.¹¹⁹ The same was true about any sentiments even Léon Blum as prime minister might have harboured for the concerns of the Viet Minh.¹²⁰ In principle, Blum held fast to the idea of a *mission civilisatrice*: ‘colonial possession reaches its final goal . . . when the people have been made able to fully free and govern themselves’.¹²¹ Blum stressed the need to oppose ‘nationalist fanatics’.¹²²

Doing away with ‘two embodiments of French colonial oppression – forced labour and the indigénat’¹²³ – was within the boundaries of colonial reform: ‘Socialists and Communists were advocating not decolonization, but progressive empire’.¹²⁴ This stance was in keeping with an overriding concern in French politics to overcome the feeling of loss through a century seen to be marked by defeat and decline.¹²⁵ On the French left, only the small Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) took a consistently anti-colonial stand.¹²⁶

The contradictions of the SFIO’s proclaimed internationalism and anti-nationalism, combined with holding on to a colonial empire, came out graphically under the premiership of Guy Mollet (1956–7), the long-standing general secretary of the SFIO. Aiming at ‘federalism’ both in Europe and in Africa, Mollet in fact presided over a massive military build-up to repress the national liberation movement in Algeria and the disastrous attempt by France and Britain, in alliance with Israel, to win back control of the Suez Canal (1956). These policies were motivated by a persistent ‘rejection of “integral” nationalism and the defence of minority rights as an absolute priority – one that clearly took precedence over national rights’.¹²⁷ Thus, ‘minority rights’ were marshalled against national independence, since this would jeopardize particularly the settler minority, the *pieds noirs* in Algeria,

117 F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 28.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

119 Lewis, ‘The tragic career of Marius Moutet’, p. 71; Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, p. 133.

120 Tran Tuong-vi, ‘The failure of the French tripartite experiment in May 1947’, *European History Quarterly* 42, 2 (2012), pp. 261–85 at p. 272.

121 *Année politique* 1946, p. 545, quoted by Smith, ‘The French colonial consensus’, p. 226.

122 *Année politique* 1947, p. 330, quoted *ibid.*, p. 226n.

123 Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, p. 67. 124 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

125 Smith, ‘The French colonial consensus’, p. 245.

126 Diarra, *La Gauche française et l’Afrique subsaharienne*, p. 26.

127 T. Imlay, ‘International socialism and decolonization during the 1950s: competing rights and the postcolonial order’, *American Historical Review* 118, 4 (2013), pp. 1105–32 at p. 1121. See also Talbot Imlay, Chapter 15, this volume.

who over the preceding decades had consistently blocked attempts at extending the suffrage and assimilationist policies in a territory deemed to be part of metropolitan France. Minority rights, then, 'became associated with the defense of a dominant white minority, and thus with colonialism itself'.¹²⁸ As an alternative to national independence, Mollet and his friends proposed 'to liberate man from all sorts of oppression'.¹²⁹ Along this trajectory, it was hoped to 'skip the stage of nationalism'.¹³⁰

Turning the Tide

While Mollet's policy met severe criticism in his own party as well as in international socialist circles, he was by no means isolated. Thus, efforts to create a relationship or even a merger between the Socialist International and the Asian Socialist Conference (ASC) that from the late 1940s onwards brought together groups mainly from South and South-East Asian countries came up against the Europeans' aversion to anti-colonial 'nationalism' and the inverse charge of thereby denying support to anti-colonial struggles.¹³¹ ASC members also protested against repression of independence movements in Algeria and Kenya.¹³²

Eventually, European socialists came to view colonialism more critically.¹³³ For British socialists, the Empire only became a major concern after the Second World War, and then bodies such as the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF), which assembled Labourites, ILP members, and trade unionists, along with Caribbean and African activists, became instrumental in changing prevailing opinion.¹³⁴ The Socialist International had adopted, already in 1952, a Declaration of Principle stressing 'self-determination',¹³⁵ but overall debate and actual policy shifted more slowly. This change was championed, *inter alia*, by parts of the SPD;¹³⁶ by the late 1950s, European socialists were generally in support of national independence, even though 'more from resignation than from enthusiasm',¹³⁷ given the 'wind of change' that, noted by Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan,¹³⁸ was sweeping through the late colonial world. Moreover, decolonization particularly in French Africa came with a

128 Ibid. 129 Pierre Commin, quoted in Imlay, 'International socialism', p. 1119.

130 Guy Mollet, quoted *ibid.*, p. 1120. 131 See Su Lin Lewis, Chapter 14, this volume.

132 Ibid. 133 Ibid. 134 Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, pp. 230–67.

135 J. Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, vol. 111 (Hanover: J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1971), pp. 620–6.

136 Imlay, 'International socialism', pp. 1121–4. 137 Ibid., p. 1125.

138 F. Myers, 'Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech: a case study in the rhetoric of policy change', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 3, 4 (2000), pp. 555–75.



Fig. 26.1 British Labour politician Manny Shinwell (1884–1986), Secretary of State for War, seeing off soldiers from the 2nd Scots Guards at Southampton, 5 September 1948. They were bound for Singapore to participate in the fight against anti-colonial resistance in Malaya. (Photograph by Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images.)

new version of ‘Eurafrique’, in the guise of association with the emerging European Economic Community.¹³⁹

These shifts occurred in the twilight of European colonialism. The SI’s 1952 Declaration already reflected the language of development that was to shape North–South relations for the following decades.¹⁴⁰ Concerns now turned towards the persistent dependence that was couched in terms such as neo-colonialism,¹⁴¹ while formal colonialism lingered on, particularly in the stubborn resistance of settler regimes. In the framework of bloc politics, this posed difficult issues for social democratic parties. Proclaimed emancipation was played off once again against power politics and anti-communist concerns. In many ways, such practices reproduced the impasses and ideological tenets of colonial reformism. However, a real alternative was possible.

¹³⁹ V. Didier, ‘Bringing the neo-patrimonial state back to Europe: French decolonization and the making of the European development aid policy’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 48 (2008), pp. 433–57.

¹⁴⁰ For criticism, see R. Kößler, ‘Development – Analytical Value and Ideological Baggage of an Elusive Term: Some Considerations on Principle’, in U. Bittlingmayer et al. (eds.), *Education and Development in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2019), pp. 47–62.

¹⁴¹ K. Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Nelson, 1965).

Counterpoint: Sweden and the Struggle against Portuguese Colonialism

Decolonization after 1945 eluded southern Africa. Settler rule persisted in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia); Salazarist Portugal clung to its colonies of Angola and Mozambique. The Cold War fostered a solid, if uneasy, alliance between these regimes and Western powers to suppress militant liberation movements. NATO member Portugal enjoyed support for its wars in Africa.

Consequently, the leading organizations in national liberation movements aligned with socialist countries, particularly the Soviet bloc. Many in the West saw repression of independence struggles as anti-communist crusades, engendering ties with the forces that solidified colonial and settler rule. Opposition parties generally supported such government policies. All paid lip service at best to national self-determination, while in fact collaborating with colonial and apartheid governments. The challenge from civil society groups, including the New Left, did not change formal politics.

The Nordic countries, with strong traditions of social democratic government, came to take a different stand. The decisive turn in Sweden is indicative. In a public debate that began in 1968, the social democratic government reached a decision not to support the massive Cabora Bassa hydroelectric project on the Zambezi River in Portuguese-occupied Mozambique.¹⁴² The project was to open the area to Portuguese settlers and to block advancing liberation fighters. Sweden was linked to Portugal through the EFTA free trade zone and an important Swedish company was involved in the project. Meanwhile, close personal relationships had developed between leading Swedish socialists and representatives of the liberation organization FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique). Moreover, in Sweden at the time, the liberal party competed with the social democrats in showing support for national liberation movements. However, rejection of the Cabora Bassa project was not a forgone conclusion: at stake were Swedish jobs, secured by a large business venture; the massive infrastructural investment could be claimed to be of value even after the demise of colonial rule – a classic constellation of domestic interest and civilizing mission. Thus, initially, the social democratic government ‘steadfastly defended’¹⁴³ the project,

¹⁴² For the following, see T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, vol. 1, *Formation of a Popular Opinion 1950–1970* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 1999), pp. 453–504.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 490.

and only a major civil society mobilization, the stance of a section of the liberals, and repercussions at the United Nations worked for ‘a 100% turnabout of the Social Democratic Party and of the [wider Swedish] labour movement’,¹⁴⁴ also with the accession of the strongly anti-colonial Olof Palme to the party leadership. Considerations of international solidarity and anti-colonial practice stood against classical concerns of social democrats. Subsequently, Sweden and other Nordic countries substantially supported national liberation movements in southern Africa. One of the main actors commented later that ‘it was a situation where you could show some decency’.¹⁴⁵

New Left Mobilization

All these changes occurred against a backdrop and to an extent under the impact of massive mobilizations outside conventional left-wing politics associated with the New Left. Not by accident, these movements took their cue from the ‘catalyst of 1956’, which encompassed, besides repression in Poland and Hungary, the traumatic battle of Algiers and the Suez intervention,¹⁴⁶ both presided over by a socialist French government. Subsequently, protest against the Vietnam War became a central trigger of student and wider activism, besides concerns like nuclear armament and sclerotic universities. Frantz Fanon’s strident analyses based on the experience of the Algerian War and Che Guevara’s internationalist appeals particularly fanned movements which took on a global scale and as such confronted colonial remnants and neo-colonial power relations. Frequently overlooked is the role of Africans in this transnational process. Amongst mobilizations ‘across the continent’,¹⁴⁷ specifically the student movement in Dakar in 1968 reached out of universities and took on a mass character.¹⁴⁸ In a way, what failed in Paris, happened

¹⁴⁴ B. Huldt and K. Misgeld (eds.), *Socialdemokratin och den svenska utrikespolitiken* (Stockholm: Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 1990), p. 97, quoted in Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, p. 500.

¹⁴⁵ T. Sellström (ed.), *Liberation in Southern Africa: Regional and Swedish Voices* (Uppsala: Nordiska Africa Institutet, 1999), p. 338.

¹⁴⁶ See Gerd-Rainer Horn, Chapter 25, this volume.

¹⁴⁷ H. Becker and D. Seddon, ‘Africa’s 1968: protests and uprisings across the continent’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 31 May 2018, available at <https://roape.net/2018/05/31/africas-1968-protests-and-uprisings-across-the-continent>, last accessed 23 December 2020; L. Zeilig, *Revolt and Protest: Student Politics and Activism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).

¹⁴⁸ H. Becker, ‘“Power to the People”: the 1968 revolt in Africa’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 29 May 2018, available at <https://roape.net/2018/05/29/power-to-the-people-the-1968-revolt-in-africa>, last accessed 23 December 2020; O. Guèye, *Mai 1968 au Sénégal. Senghor face aux étudiants et au mouvement syndical* (Paris: Karthala, 2017).

for a brief moment in Senegal, only to meet savage repression by the Senegalese government. A few months later, when Senegal's president, the politician-poet L. S. Senghor, was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in Frankfurt, he met violent protest, both on account of his government's repressive action and because of his silence on the genocidal war against Biafra, the secessionist Nigerian province.¹⁴⁹

Third Worldist engagement continued once the New Left had branched out into conventional politics, ossified Maoist groupuscules, or new social movements; among its important offspring were a wide range of solidarity movements, including in southern Africa,¹⁵⁰ with an occasional impact on official politics as in Sweden.

A Bleak Balance Sheet

An invocation of 'decency', as in the Swedish case, may appear to be modest compared with classical pronouncements on the destiny of humankind or the hopes for universal emancipation once associated with socialism. When it came to colonialism, such goals were systematically compromised. Concepts about the mission of humankind eschewed the regional inequality of the world. Instead, a parochial concern, the emancipation of the west European proletariat (Engels), was given precedence over any further considerations. Similarly, expanding European settlement appeared as a progressive proposition, ignoring the fate of indigenous populations. Despite their alignment with all manner of rebellious initiatives, anarchist groups could not evade similar contradictions.

Where social democrats acceded to government, mainly after the First World War, colonialism proved to be intractable. The exigencies of government trumped any verbal interpellations against colonialism, if only its 'excesses'.

When particularly French socialists objected against 'nationalism', they disregarded the wide variety of nationalisms which in the twentieth century included progressive potentialities.¹⁵¹ Still, misgivings about the balkanization

149 J. Vogel, 'Senghor et l'ouverture culturelle de la RFA en 68. Pour une histoire transnationale Allemagne-France-Afrique', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 94, 2 (2007), pp. 135–48.

150 Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, pp. 239, 286; R. Kößler and H. Melber, 'The West German Solidarity Movement with the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa: A (Self-) Critical Retrospective', in U. Engel and R. Kappel (eds.), *Germany's Africa Policy Revisited: Interests, Images and Incrementalism*, 2nd edn (Berlin: Lit, 2006), pp. 101–23.

151 Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

of Africa in the independence process were not entirely misplaced, nor was the inherent scepticism against the statist slant of nationalism that worried anarchist proponents of anti-colonial struggle. Such concerns might have formed part of a consistently anti-colonial politics, but neither socialism nor anarchism came up with such practice.

While activist, communist internationalism did not prove a viable alternative on the left. Regardless of greater consistency in supporting anti-colonial struggles, slippages included French communists' attitude towards the Rif War of the 1920s and the Algerian War of the 1950s. Moreover, the concept of a unitary, worldwide approach eschewed attention to local conditions and tended to assert a centralizing Soviet control.

After the end of formal empire, colonial tutelage was translated into development co-operation: underlying global hierarchies remained untouched. Again, inside as well as outside government, socialist parties tended to collude. They might have held out hope for emancipatory aspirations in the metropolises, at least at certain moments, but they did not extend such hopes to the colonial (or ex-colonial) world.

As presaged by anarchists, including M. K. Gandhi,¹⁵² the inherent statism of national liberation struggles has produced new forms of domination and exploitation across the Global South.¹⁵³

Further Reading

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¹⁵² D. Kantowsky, *Sarvodaya: The Other Development* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980).

¹⁵³ J. Saul, *A Flawed Freedom: Rethinking Southern African Liberation* (London: Pluto, 2014).

Socialism, Gender, and the Emancipation of Women

SUSAN ZIMMERMANN

Visiting Highgate Cemetery in London in 1983, the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, feminist theologian and leftist peace activist Dorothee Sölle captured, in a beautiful poem, women's 'difficulties with chuck 'n' freddy'. '[S]ocialism', wrote Sölle, '... i imagine / is a building with many apartments / and i pick a quarrel with you, guys / ... / learning to think feminine / we will need to widen-expand / just like skirts / all your concepts / since we are always in peculiar circumstances-permanently expecting / ...'¹

Socialism, in all its incarnations, including those discussed in the present publication, has indeed been characterized by its in practice ambiguous relationship to women's emancipation. From the beginning, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the human emancipation promised by socialism prominently included the emancipation of women; yet at the same time socialism was conceptualized and organized around the notion of class. The how and the when of resolving the 'women's question' was fraught with tension. Socialism has tended to be tardy in terms of overcoming women's secondary status in the world of paid work and reticent about women's subordination and male power in daily life, family, and intimate relationships *within* the labouring classes. Socialism was dominated by men, and was masculinist in terms of its organizational culture, political agenda, and activist repertoires.

None of the above hindered the commitment of women who belonged to or identified with the labouring classes to socialism, and many of them,

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¹ Republished as D. Sölle, 'schwierigkeiten mit chuck 'n' freddy', *Das Argument* 314 (2015), pp. 465–8, available online through the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. The imperfect English-language translation is my own.

throughout their lifetimes, challenged and aimed to redress some of socialism's masculinism. Within the working-class movements, they simultaneously fought for women's class and gender interests – as they construed them – and some aimed to represent and pursue the interests of lower-class women in social movements and institutions beyond the working classes. Although the position of these women within socialism remained precarious and their influence limited, their thinking, organizing, and activism was nonetheless crucial in bringing about gendered change in socialist movements, organizations, and states. Their efforts visibly shaped socialism's encounter with gender issues and their activism had an impact on the evolution of gender politics at large. Their history thus makes visible and helps to scrutinize socialist women and men's gendered interests and politics, the many marginalizations of women throughout the history of socialism, and the contribution of socialism to women's emancipation.

This chapter primarily discusses the international history of socialism, the demands feminist socialists or socialist feminists – as they might be characterized in hindsight – made on socialism and society at large, and examples of how socialism engaged with women's emancipation; it does not explore the impact of socialism's quest for women's emancipation on overall gendered socio-economic and political change. Most of the female socialist activists and thinkers foregrounded in this chapter would have never self-described as feminist. Many of their demands and agendas came to be adopted, though often with much delay, sometimes more on paper than in actual reality, and repeatedly without the desired liberating results, by socialist movements and institutions. The first section provides insight into the contours of the complex relationship between socialism, gender, and women. The second section introduces main clusters of the socialist programme of women's emancipation over time and examples of related struggles.

A Complex Relationship

Socialist thinking and action developed in a world of ubiquitous male dominance in all spheres of life, including the legal and social-cultural subordination of women, economic inequality, and men's power over women in the everyday. This state of things changed, although only very gradually, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Whatever far-reaching visions of women's emancipation circulated within socialist networks and organizations, one thing is clear: the thinking, impetus, and action of those involved, that is, socialist men and socialist women, was influenced

by both the context of male dominance and the socialist vision of women's emancipation, and there was a broad spectrum of treatment experienced by women in practice.

The decades between the time when Saint-Simonism played a prominent role (1820s–30s) and the demise of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) (c. 1880) saw a remarkable presence of the vision of women's liberation and equality – often equality in difference, and sometimes equality in the future alone – in socialist thinking, including celebrated contributions by women. At the same time, within socialist networks and early organizing and action, women were far from equal. They were always in the minority. In the most important international association, the IWMA, women were explicitly welcomed as members, yet in its more formalized public appearance the IWMA remained all male. Women's status was subject to male leaders' shifting interest and – sometimes arbitrary – action. There are both famous and hardly known examples of how women, often in response to inequality or degradation, created or expanded their own networks and engaged in multiple forms of individual and collective action. Historian Claire Goldberg Moses has studied the gender relations in the Saint-Simonian movement, in which hundreds of women participated. For some time, the movement was organized in a system of parallel female and male 'hierarchies' (presided over by a Father and a Mother, respectively). The practical initiatives of the Saint-Simonians were each directed by a 'couple', that is, a man and a woman. However, in 1831, the female and male hierarchies were combined, and women became severely under-represented and held lower ranks in the new mixed-sex hierarchy. Soon thereafter, Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin, the leader of the movement, expelled women from their positions in the hierarchy; he also developed the doctrine 'l'attente de La Femme' ('wait for the Woman'). The men belonging to the movement, because they could not act on behalf of women on account of fundamental sex-based difference, had to wait for the Female Messiah to complete the doctrine, and the seat next to Enfantin remained vacant.

Saint-Simonian women responded to their marginalization in the movement by creating a newspaper that only published contributions by women, the *Tribune des femmes*, which was issued (with varying titles) between 1832 and 1834. Many of those who regularly wrote in the *Tribune* self-identified in their contributions as 'femmes prolétaires'. One of the editors, Suzanne Voilquin, explained that the journal was open 'to all women's thoughts', implying that women of all classes could contribute. The *Tribune des femmes*

declared early on that 'the cause of women is universal and not only Saint-Simonian'.²

The history of Saint-Simonism encapsulates well how, from the early days of socialism and depending on circumstances, working-class women identifying with socialist ideas, and women identifying with the cause of these women, combined and meandered between activism side by side with men and single-sex endeavours foregrounding women's voices and demands. Socialist women also defied the compartmentalization of their thinking and action within social movement sectors and related conceptual thinking pre-constructed by workers' or women's movements. Political scientist Antje Schrupp has shown that leading female members of the IWMA found their way into the International because they were discontented with the turn to pragmatism, that is, the demands for concrete reforms alone, in other contemporary social movements, including the women's movement. In turn, their self-positioning and action within the IWMA cannot easily be subsumed under the evolving conflicts between major political currents led and construed by the key male protagonists and their followers. Virginie Barbet, Elisabeth Dmitrieff, André Léo, and Victoria Woodhull, the four women studied by Schrupp, resisted thinking in terms of class- or gender-antagonisms and workers' and women's demands for access to pre-existing institutions. They demanded an 'interlinkage' of social movements, developed a variegated political vision that aimed for alternative 'overarching societal models' and the 'assertion of the common interests of all people', and used their 'disturbing' presence in the International to promote new thinking and action.³

It was to remain a frequent occurrence well beyond the nineteenth century that women identifying with socialism moved back and forth between or participated simultaneously in different social movements, repeatedly 'picking fights' with their fellow activists in each context.

The IWMA was active in an era of transition in the history of social movements. From the 1870s onwards, socialism transmuted from a loose or personalized transnational network to formalized, mass-based national as well as empire-wide and nationalizing organizations that joined forces under the umbrella of new, again nation- and empire-based international organizations. The same was true for the civic engagement aimed at the 'liberation from

2 C. G. Moses, 'Saint-Simonian men/Saint-Simonian women: the transformation of feminist thought in 1830s' France', *Journal of Modern History* 54, 2 (1982), pp. 240–67, incl. original quotes.

3 A. Schrupp, *Nicht Marxistin und auch nicht Anarchistin. Frauen in der Ersten Internationale* (Königstein: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 1999).

subordination by virtue of . . . sex' which had now transformed into an organized movement 'by women . . . for women', or, the first women's movement.⁴ The organizational and political strategies of the labour and the women's movements evolved around the prioritization of either class or gender as primary concerns. In the labour movement this was often combined with the claim that the gender interests of proletarian women were also covered.

This political set-up resulted in intense political and organizational competition. While marginalized in both movements, working-class women and the representation of the interests identified as their gender and class interests stood at the centre of this competition. The labour movement claimed these women because they belonged to the working class: only the labour movement would truly fight for their interest, whereas the women's movement was dominated by 'bourgeois' women and their class interests. The women's movement claimed the working-class women because they were women: only the women's movement took proper care of their interests as women, whereas the workers' movement was dominated by men and male interest. The debate about sexual harassment in the workplace, as we would call the phenomenon today, can serve as a simple example of the resulting controversies. In the labour movement press, sexualized atrocities against working women were regularly portrayed as harassment by superiors, whereas, in the women's movement press, they were seen rather as harassment by men. Both these views contained part of the truth, and each concealed or swept aside the complementary part. Therefore, it was easy for both sides in the political debate to point the finger at the other movement's weak points in addressing the issue. The women's movement explained to the labour movement that harassment included harassment by proletarian men, that is, the phenomenon was first and foremost a gender problem, namely, a problem of male dominance and power. Harassment, retaliated the labour movement, predominantly involved the power of the superior, the proverbial capitalist and his deputies, and it was thus primarily a class problem. In other words: the women's movement pointed out that the labour movement neglected the gender dimension of the oppression of proletarian women within the labouring classes in particular, while the labour movement accused the women's movement of taking no or too little account of the class-specific dimension of the oppression of proletarian women.

The changing organizational character of the labour movement and the women's movement, and the more clear-cut separation and compe-

4 G. Bock, *Women in European History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 116.

tition between them, markedly altered the position and the available organizational–political choices for socialist women within the workers’ movement and in between the two movements. Within the socialist workers’ movement, which was increasingly based on formal membership, institutionalization, hierarchy, and bureaucracy, women were distinctly under-represented among the rank and file, drastically marginalized within the movement apparatuses, and virtually absent from the leadership. In the interwar period, the percentage of women within the membership of the national trade union federations constituting the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU)⁵ ranged between 13 and 15 per cent on average, with national percentages as low as 6 or 4 per cent (Bulgaria and Spain) and as high as 21 per cent (Finland). With the exception of the British TUC, where Margaret Bondfield was elected chairman of the General Council in 1923 (but *de facto* did not take office) and Anne Loughlin, who took office for one whole term in 1942, there was no female president or secretary general in any of the national federations constituting the IFTU, and the IFTU leadership was all male throughout its existence.

If the IFTU claimed to represent 2 million female workers in the 1930s, the International Council of Social Democratic Women (ICSOW) counted 1.7 million members in the 1950s. The percentage of women amongst the members of the social democratic parties in individual countries ranged from 8 per cent in Japan to more than 40 per cent in Great Britain and Luxembourg.⁶

Organizational patterns, as well as ideas about the relationship between organization and action, were different in the anarchist–syndicalist wing of socialism, emerging from the 1860s and striking strong roots on many continents in the decades to come. The emphasis on direct action and community-building from below opened doors in some contexts for forms and dynamics of women’s involvement less common in the social democratic wing. Andrew Grant Wood has shown how libertarian women in the 1920s took on decisive roles in the tenant movement in Veracruz, Mexico, when they promoted grassroots organizing and orchestrated direct action. In 1922, María Luisa Marín and her female comrades blocked the entrances to two large markets of the city, inviting domestic servants to join their struggle. When her companion, who was the chair of the tenant organization, was jailed in 1924, Marín assumed formal leadership of it. She organized colourful actions, such as

5 All information on the IFTU here and in the following is from S. Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Die IGB-Fraueninternationale und die internationale Geschlechterpolitik der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2021).

6 Socialist International Women (ed.), *The First Hundred Years: A Short History of Socialist International Women* (Berlin: Vorwärts Buch Verlag, 2007).

instructing residents to demonstrate their continued commitment to the tenants' strike by decorating their *patios* with red banners.⁷ In a sweeping analysis of Italian female migrants' evolving radicalism at the time of the strike waves in the US garment industry in the early twentieth century, Jennifer Guglielmo has highlighted how these women carved out political spaces for themselves in the movement. They played an important role in the 'radical subculture' of the *organizzatori* or anarcho-syndicalists in New York's Lower East Side and elsewhere. Women belonging to the Gruppo Emancipazione della Donna, formed by Maria Roda in 1897, wrote treatises addressed to young women to encourage rebellion, others formed theatre groups and staged their own productions. During the strikes, they joined radical unions en masse, drawing, among other things, on what they had learned about the power of collective action from their parents' 'stories of peasant uprisings' back in southern Italy. Guglielmo concludes that the difference between the women's history she has discovered and anarchist men's memoirs and oral testimonies 'that proclaim women's absence' suggests 'that women's activism was not only distinct from men's but also largely invisible and insignificant for them'.⁸ This insight speaks to the larger historical fact that socialist organizations and male activists tended to ignore or belittle women's gendered movement work even though women did make a significant contribution. This was because their activism often built, as Temma Kaplan has shown, on a sexual division of labour in which what women did was considered 'pre-political' or irrelevant.⁹

Male dominance was clearly mirrored in the more formal composition of the anarchist-syndicalist movement and when counting membership. The Liga de Resistência dos Operários e Operárias das Fábricas de Tecidos de São Paulo seems to have been exceptional in that it decreed that the leadership had to be composed in equal numbers of women and men. In many organizations, women's formal participation tended to be as limited as in other socialist currents. In Alexandria in Egypt, the police in the early 1880s counted fifty-three anarchists, among them six or seven women. Separate women's branches existed in several mixed-sex organizations, including the Women Workers'

7 A. Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870–1927* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2001), esp. pp. 113–14, 181, 191–4. See also L. Nicholas, 'Gender and Sexuality', in C. Levy and M. S. Adams (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 603–21; L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009), ch. 10.

8 J. Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

9 T. Kaplan, 'Female consciousness and collective action: the case of Barcelona, 1910–1918', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, 3 (1982), pp. 545–65, esp. pp. 548–55, 566.

Federation of the syndicalist Local Workers' Federation in Bolivia founded in 1927, and the Women's Committee of the IWW in Australia. At the same time, radical women with anarchist-syndicalist backgrounds around the world tended to join forces autonomously.¹⁰ Probably the most well-known case was the Spanish women-only *Mujeres Libres*, organized, in the words of Martha A. Ackelsberg, to counter both women's 'diffidence' and men's sexism in the anarchist movement.¹¹ Importantly, writings by anarchist-syndicalist women were published in the movement newspapers, and there were special journals for and sometimes edited by women, such as *Mother Earth*, published by Emma Goldman in the United States between 1906 and 1917.¹²

Taken together, the organizational and activist choices of women identifying with any of the currents of socialism and advocating class *and* gender interests of working-class women were limited, and each option came with considerable drawbacks. The argument and politics developed on and from some of the large platforms of mainstream socialism and feminism illustrate well how both movements aimed to co-opt working-class women, and how, in so doing, they failed to represent working-class women's class and gender interests together. In 1894, Clara Zetkin, the leading women's politician in German social democracy, postulated in the eighth issue of the SPD women's magazine *Die Gleichheit* (*Equality*) – the journal had been published since 1892 under Zetkin's leadership – the principle of a 'clean break between bourgeois rights-feminism and the movement of working women'. In this period, socialist women organized in or associated with the social democratic labour movement had indeed increasingly shied away from co-operation with those women's organizations that did not actively show solidarity with the male-dominated labour movement. From the perspective of representatives of cross-class women's organizations, Zetkin's doctrine, aimed at fostering this development, embodied a politics of dividing the women's movement. This accusation can be considered justified insofar as the women's movement actually did invite all women to participate and did represent interests women had in common. This, however, was only half of the truth. The other half emerges when the gaze is reversed to draw attention to a mirror-like problem on the other side, in

10 Information taken from the contributions by A. Gorman, E. Toledo, and L. Biondi, and the editors in L. van der Walt and S. J. Hirsch (eds.), *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); van der Walt and Schmidt, *Black Flame*, ch. 10.

11 M. A. Ackelsberg, *Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), esp. p. 116.

12 S. Jeppesen and H. Nazar, 'Genders and Sexualities in Anarchist Movements', in R. Kinna (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 162–91.

the women's movement itself. Namely, the cross-class women's organizations regularly avoided demands that would have aimed to solve not only the 'women's question' but the 'class question' as well. Their offer to working-class women to join the women's movement was based on the premise that they should accept the primacy of the 'gender question', in the same way as the invitation of the labour movement to working-class women was based on the premise that they would accept the primacy of the 'class question'. On the side of the women's movement, this attitude was exemplified in the early twentieth century in the policy of the liberal-progressive International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), at that time one of the most important international women's organizations. A 1911 resolution defined the 'sole object' of the Alliance as being to establish the principle that 'sex should not be a disqualification' concerning suffrage. By not declaring its position on the question of including the lower classes in the right to vote, the IWSA abstained from taking a position on the 'class question'. Its formalized demands were directed exclusively towards gender equality. Working-class women and women who identified with their interests thus could work in the Alliance on the condition that they accepted this primacy of the 'gender question' over the 'class question'.¹³

The bottom line was thus that there was no ideal organizational-political way for working-class women in a world of competing social movement organizations of workers and women, or, in the words of Dorothy Sue Cobble, '[i]n the end, there may have been no correct choice possible'.¹⁴ As a result, women advocating working-class women's interests continued to organize alongside men in male-dominated organizations; they populated various forms of intra-organizational platforms mandated to pursue women's issues within male-dominated working-class organizations; they formed their own, autonomous organizations of working-class women; and they participated in cross-class women's organizations. On the local and national level, working-class women in some countries organized early on in women-only trade unions. In the beginning, this sometimes reflected the fact that male-only and male-dominated craft-based trade unions did not admit unskilled workers.

13 S. Zimmermann, 'A Struggle over Gender, Class, and the Vote: Unequal International Interaction and the Birth of the "Female International" of Socialist Women', in O. Janz and D. Schönplüg (eds.), *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective* (New York: Berghahn, 2012), pp. 101–26, incl. original quotes; E. DuBois, 'Woman suffrage and the left: an international socialist-feminist perspective', *New Left Review* 186 (March/April 1991), pp. 20–45.

14 D. S. Cobble, 'A higher "standard of life" for the world: US labor women's reform internationalism and the legacies of 1919', *Journal of American History* 100, 4 (2014), pp. 1052–85 at p. 1081.

Examples of women's trade unions included the British Women's Trade Union League established in 1874 (as the Women's Protective and Provident League), the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (1900), and the Women's Trade Union League of America (1903).¹⁵

Within the Second International, women aimed early on to generate intra-organizational co-operation. During the 1896 congress of the International, female delegates called an informal meeting regarding a project for the International to co-ordinate the activities of socialist women in individual countries. Yet it would take many years until a women's branch of the International came into being. The first International Conference of Socialist Women was held in conjunction with the 1907 congress of the International in Stuttgart. The congress voted to set up an international women's secretariat with Clara Zetkin at its helm and *Die Gleichheit* as its publication organ.¹⁶ These events signalled the establishment of the first women's socialist international, established as part of the Second International. Expanding on earlier national initiatives, the second International Conference of Socialist Women, held in 1910 in Copenhagen, decided that a carefully prepared 'women's day' should be held 'in every year and in each country'.¹⁷ The Copenhagen decision triggered what would become a predominantly socialist and communist internationalist ritual, observed around the world (under various names and on various dates) throughout the twentieth century. In 1977, the United Nations recognized 8 March as International Women's Day.

The interwar period saw an impressive array of separate organizing within the international social democratic labour movement. The International Cooperative Alliance formed a women's committee in 1921 that transmuted into an autonomous international organization of co-operative women, the International Co-operative Women's Guild (ICWG), in 1924; the organization reintegrated into the International Alliance in 1963. Both the IFTU and the successor of the Second International, the newly formed LSI, granted

15 R. Miller Jacoby, 'Feminism and Class Consciousness in the British and American Women's Trade Union Leagues, 1890–1925', in B. A. Carroll (ed.), *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 137–60.

16 Congrès International Socialiste des Travailleurs et des Chambres Syndicales Ouvrières Londres 26 Juillet–2 Août 1896, *Histoire de la 11e Internationale*, vol. x (Geneva: Minkoff Reprint, 1980), pp. 151–2; G. Haupt, *Programm und Wirklichkeit. Die internationale Sozialdemokratie vor 1914* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1970), p. 207.

17 The quote gives how Zetkin presented a related resolution (which she, Käthe Duncker, and comrades had laid before the conference). *Vorwärts* 27 (1910) 201, Supplement No. 3, 28 August 1910; the proposed resolution is contained in 'Zweite Internationale Konferenz sozialistischer Frauen in Kopenhagen'; both items under http://library.fes.de/cgi-bin/populo/zweint.pl?f_ABC=f&t_showde=x.

institutional representation for (overwhelmingly) women pursuing women's politics within the organization. In the LSI from 1923, a women's representative – the function was performed by Adelheid Popp, later by Alice Pels – had the right to participate in the meetings of the executive, yet a demand from the women themselves that their representative should have voting rights was dismissed. A large women's committee and a smaller, executive board for women's affairs were formed. From 1926, a permanent women's secretary co-ordinated all women's matters in the LSI secretariat, and from 1927 the circular *International Information* of the LSI included a *Women's Supplement*. From the early 1930s onwards, women from east European countries and their agendas played a more visible role in the LSI's women's branch as compared to the 1920s.¹⁸ The women's branch of the IFTU, established in 1924, was smaller than its LSI sister, and had a reduced status and less resources at its disposal. The IFTU women's branch was established following the International Federation of Working Women (IFWW) (from 1919 to 1921 the International Congress of Working Women), the first autonomous international organization of trade union women, which was dismantled after intense conflict over the relationship to the IFTU in 1924.¹⁹ Once incorporated into the IFTU, the women were not allowed to further pursue the interest of building contacts with women workers in the large Asian countries that had been present in the IFWW.

After the Second World War, well before the establishment of the SI in 1951, social democratic women formed an International Socialist Women's Committee. In 1955, the women, dissatisfied with their status and opportunities within the SI, created the autonomous ICSDW, with the Danish Nina Andersen as its first president. The ICSDW was very Eurocentric. The first delegates from outside Europe to an International Socialist Women's Conference after 1945 came from Canada and Japan, attending the third conference in 1951. Apart from Vera Matthias from Brazil, none of the presidents or general secretaries came from a non-European country before the twenty-first century.²⁰ On the trade union side of international socialism, the ICFTU, the IFTU's successor, formed in 1949, held the first International Summer School for Women in 1953, and

18 For the LSI, see S. Neunsinger, 'Creating the International Spirit of Socialist Women: Women in the Labour and Socialist International 1923–1939', in P. Jonsson, S. Neunsinger, and J. Sangster (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: Women's Organizing in Europe and the Americas, 1880–1940s* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2007), pp. 117–56; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik*, p. 214; A. Ghit, 'Solidarity and inequality: European socialist women's international organizing in the interwar period' (2021), <https://zar-ah-ceu.org/solidarity-and-inequality-european-socialist-womens-international-organizing-in-the-interwar-period/>.

19 Cobble, 'Higher "standard of life"'.

20 Socialist International Women, *The First Hundred Years*.

installed a joint Consultative Committee on Women Workers' Questions, together with the International Trade Secretariats as an advisory body, in 1957.²¹

In all their variety, socialist women's organizational efforts inevitably faced challenges. When working from institutional platforms for women's affairs within male-dominated organizations, the women activists and functionaries, on the one hand, were regularly confronted with the suspicion of 'separatism'. Their women platforms often lacked institutional guarantees, resources, and decision-making power, and there was a tendency to belittle and ignore the activities and politics they developed. Socialist leaderships took decisions as to whether women belonging to their organizations might co-operate with women's committees or organizations that involved 'bourgeois' or communist women, and they time and again vetoed, limited, and strictly controlled such collaboration. Even women's platforms with comparatively high institutional standing could be degraded if the women 'exceeded their powers', or if other interests made such a move appear desirable. On the other hand, women's platforms in male-dominated organizations served as grounds from which progressive policy scripts for working-class women – as defined by the actors – could be developed. Working from such platforms also meant that women had access to material resources and could make use of the political and institutional standing and power of these larger organizations – for example, the status of the large international trade union federations within the tripartite structure of the ILO – for their own purposes. For autonomous organizations of working women, the lack of access to such material and political resources formed a serious obstacle to developing effective politics. In addition, these organizations were often confronted with open hostility on behalf of the large male-dominated organizations. Yet at the same time, organizational autonomy was extremely precious, enabling working-class women to develop their political and personal potential.

Across many decades, the institutional-political patterns described so far did not transform in substance, even though women over time made advances in organized socialism in terms of membership, institutional standing, and even though, during these decades, the policy scripts for socialist gender and women's politics 'modernized'. The pattern was partly reconfigured when the global New Left and the second women's movement (also called the women's liberation movement, new or autonomous women's movement, or second wave) emerged from the 1960s onwards. The New Left called into question, as historian

21 Y. Richards, 'Labour's gendered misstep: the women's committee and African women workers, 1957–1968', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44, 3 (2011), pp. 415–42; D. S. Cobble, 'International women's trade unionism and education', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 90 (2016), pp. 153–63.

Brigitte Studer has put it, 'next to the macro-structures of power . . . the micro-structures of domination', and thus aimed to revolutionize the everyday. Yet in actual reality, gender relations were often left 'undisturbed'. Women soon began to form separate groups aimed at putting into practice the vision of a radical renewal of subjectivity and interpersonal relationships. These women's groups formed the nucleus of the early new or autonomous women's movement.²² In the United States, a parallel process was under way in the civil rights movement, and here the second women's movement can be re-read as a joint venture of unequal 'Black, Chicana, and White' (as well as other) sisters whose movements developed together-apart.²³ Second-wave socialist feminism and women's socialist-feminist groups can be considered a product of the new historical conjuncture emerging in the context of the New Left and the second women's movement.

The Politics of Women's Emancipation

The socialist vision of women's emancipation, with its origins in the nineteenth century, depended, as sociologist Maxine Molyneux has eloquently argued, first, 'on the removal of socially constructed constraints – legal, economic, domestic, social, later psychological'. Secondly, the twin goals informing this vision, namely, women's 'social individuation' and the equalization of the status of women and men, could and would be attained only when connected with overall economic liberation. Depending on time, place, and political conviction, socialists approached economic liberation in a variety of ways.²⁴ This included the vision of: humanized capitalism; political self-determination and the defiance of imperialism; economic development as generating the material foundation for both human and women's emancipation; post-capitalist economic transformation; and the instant replacement of private property and the state by self-organized community.

Invariably, the principal (feminist-)socialist programme of women's emancipation unfolding within this framework was construed as representing 'the' interests of women and thus, in actual fact, construed and delimited these interests in a particular manner. It was based on three cornerstones: women's full and equal participation in the sphere of the political; the abolition of all

22 B. Studer, "'1968" and the formation of the feminist subject', *Twentieth Century Communisms: A Journal of International History* 3, 3 (2011), pp. 38–69.

23 B. Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

24 M. Molyneux, *Women's Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and beyond* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 102–14.

practices signalling patriarchal and familial authority over women (including any 'remainders' thereof) as well as all impairments of their personal freedom; and the politics of women's work aimed at women's economic emancipation.

Demands that were linked to the first cornerstone, including – as briefly mentioned above – suffrage, and equal status in the sphere of the political and public institutions more generally, will not be discussed here. Demands that related to the second cornerstone, while united in their basic vision of equality and mutual respect in marriage, took on manifold colourings in different parts of the world in response to the varieties of women's ill-treatment, abuse, and subordination. Kumari Jayawardena has carefully documented some of this variety, including the demands to abolish polygamy, forced marriage, and female seclusion in Indonesia; the denunciation of the 'three submissions' (to father, husband, and eldest son) in Vietnam; and opposition to foot binding, the doctrine of women's chastity, and arranged marriage in China.²⁵ He-Yin Zhen (1884–c. 1920), an early Chinese radical socialist with strong anarcho-feminist leanings, added 'child bride marriage' – that is, the custom of raising, as she put it, poor girls in the wealthy household of the parents of the future husband – as well as concubinage, wife-sharing by several brothers in remote villages, and widow suicide – to the list. Emphasizing the material and class-based reasons for all these gendered practices, He-Yin Zhen advocated the immediate 'overthrow [of] the system of private property' and its replacement 'with communal property': 'If we want love to flourish, then we must first abandon money . . . [A] women's revolution must go hand in hand with an economic revolution.'²⁶

After the demise of 'utopian socialisms', for a long time it was women with anarchist leanings, as well as a number of intellectual women of radical persuasion, who, around the world, lent weight to a discourse and practice of sexual and personal liberation and fulfilment, transgressing the relevant sets of more formalistic, rights-focused mainstream socialist demands. The short-lived anarchist newspaper *La Voz de la Mujer*, published in Argentina between 1896 and 1899, greeted its readers with the demand for 'our bit of pleasure in the banquet of life', as opposed to 'being a plaything for our infamous exploiters or vile husbands'. The characteristic simultaneous challenge to multiple oppression was captured well when '[o]ne of *La Voz*'s supporters . . . signed herself

25 K. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Verso, 2016 [1986]), esp. pp. 141–5, 149, 204–6, 183–7; D. Marr, 'The 1920s women's rights debates in Vietnam', *Journal of Asian Studies* 35, 3 (1976), pp. 372, 385–6, 388–9.

26 He-Yin Zhen, 'Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution' (1907), in L. Liu, R. E. Karl, and D. Ko (eds.), *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 92–104. In their introduction the editors stress the anti-statist dimension of Zhen's thinking.

“No God, No Boss, No Husband”. Soon the group publishing the paper had to defend the rejection of marital ‘tutelage’ that confined women to ‘raising your children and washing your clothes’ against ‘all hell’ of opposition that ‘broke loose’ within anarchist circles after the publication of the first issue.²⁷ As described by Jennifer Guglielmo, women in anarchist circles repeatedly pursued a politics of practice, complementing their (sometimes more and sometimes less traditional) family life with a strong involvement in grassroots communities in which women played a prominent role. The politics of practice of ‘iconic’ women such as Emma Goldman (and probably many others) involved relationships with multiple, including female, lovers.²⁸

Women pursuing women’s agendas in more mainstream socialist contexts similarly lived large portions of their daily lives within somewhat similar women’s and mixed-sex communities, as recently demonstrated by Uwe Fuhrmann in his study of the life and politics of the Berlin-based social democratic trade unionist Paula Thiede (1870–1919).²⁹ However, these women seldom translated this foundational element of their lived commitment into a tangible political programme aimed at changing everyday life. Rather, they tended to foreground the bread-and-butter side of the struggle for civic equality and personal freedom. In the 1930s, for instance, they came out in defence of women’s ‘right to work’ and equal treatment in social security legislation, when both were challenged with reference to women’s civic status, that is, their being married, in several European polities.³⁰

Issues related to women’s equal status in marriage and their sexual freedom caused controversy in socialist politics and remained contentious in various contexts for a long period of time. Reproductive freedom, with birth control and abortion at its core, was one case in point. As the politics of reproductive freedom step by step gained support among socialists, they would repeatedly intermingle with issues of population policy and eugenic agendas (not discussed here).

Leading anarchist women committed themselves to birth control as a political programme well before the First World War. In the years leading

27 Molyneux, *Women’s Movements*, ch. 1, incl. original quotes.

28 C. Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), ch. 3.

29 U. Fuhrmann, ‘Frau Berlin’. *Paula Thiede (1870–1919). Vom Arbeiterkind zur Gewerkschaftsvorsitzenden* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2019).

30 S. Zimmermann, ‘Framing Working Women’s Rights Internationally: Contributions of the IFTU Women’s International’, in S. Bellucci and H. Weiss (eds.), *The Internationalisation of the Labour Question: Ideological Antagonism, Workers’ Movements and the ILO since 1919* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 95–117.

up to the war the 'birth strike debate', evolving around the politicization of the control of fertility, rocked German social democracy. Thousands of women poured into an overcrowded Berlin assembly hall when Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg, in line with the party leadership, spoke on 29 August 1913 at a meeting 'Against the Birth Strike'. The leadership and Zetkin declared birth control a private matter and condemned the 'birth strike', a slogan initially advocated in anarchist contexts. However, a group of social democratic Berlin physicians, and, as became tangible in the context of this and other large meetings, many women, espoused a strong interest in birth control. In the end this visibly affected the balance of forces within German social democracy. The well-documented aversion of proletarian (and other) men against the use of contraceptives notwithstanding, the SPD in 1914 was the only party that voted in the imperial parliament against the tightening of the restrictions surrounding contraception. Soon thereafter the party even initiated a campaign against 'state-enforced motherhood'.³¹ In 1920, it submitted a motion in parliament to liberalize abortion.

The international women's networks of mainstream socialism were increasingly outspoken and clear about their demands regarding reproductive rights from the interwar period onwards. In 1928, a large group of delegations to the third international women's conference of the LSI, and several individual delegates from other countries, declared themselves against the 'thread of punishment against artificial abortus'.³² In 1968, even the women's committee of the ICFTU demanded women's right to contraceptives and the right of all people to 'freely choose the moment when they will be psychologically, physically and materially prepared to have children'.³³ The ICSDW leadership declared that while abortion equalled 'the failure of contraception', the legalization of both of these practices, constituting 'a question of individual liberty', formed 'part of our socialist aims'.³⁴

31 A. Bergmann, 'Geburtenrückgang – Gebärtstreik. Zur Gebärtstreikdebatte 1913 in Berlin', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit* 4 (1981), pp. 7–55, incl. original quotes.

32 *Dritter Kongreß der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale. Brüssel 5. bis 11. August 1928. Berichte und Verhandlungen. Zweiter Band* (Zurich: Verlag des Sekretariats der SAI, 1928), VIII, pp. 54–5; no British representative signed. P. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), has described the commitment of the British labour women to birth control and their reluctance to support demands for abortion.

33 Quoted in D. S. Cobble, *For the Many: A Global Story of American Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), p. 366.

34 'Contraception and abortion', *ICSDW Bulletin* 23, 6 (1977), pp. 57–8 (WASI (Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin (eds.), 'Women and Social Movements Internationally', <https://search.alexanderstreet.com/wasi>)).

Historical context strongly shaped socialist Realpolitik on reproductive rights. Some of the hesitancy of the SPD leadership in pre-1918 Germany undoubtedly resulted from the fact that the party was constantly blamed in public discourse and parliament as primarily responsible for the declining birthrate.³⁵ Decades later, the Sandinista regime in power in Nicaragua would be reluctant throughout the 1980s, regardless of its profound commitment to women's emancipation, to lift the abortion ban. The regime justified this reluctance not only with reference to strong popular opposition resulting from the cultural hegemony of Catholicism in the country. In addition, President Daniel Ortega pointed to the US-sponsored Contra War as a 'policy of genocide', and also spoke out against the promotion of sterilization³⁶ – which at the time indeed formed a key tool of international and US-orchestrated anti-natalist population policies in Latin America.

The equalization of women's legal status in family and marriage similarly could be delayed well into the second half of the twentieth century; it was preceded by full-scale legal change in this realm in the state-socialist world. In an early (1955) resolution on 'women in the underdeveloped countries' the ICSDW expressed 'its admiration' for women in these countries 'who in face of opposition and prejudice are fighting for emancipation and striving to abolish traditional customs and practices which deprive women of essential human rights and even of their physical integrity'.³⁷ Things looked different in self-proclaimed socialist countries. Historian Laura Bier has examined the course of action in Nasser's Egypt. Here the judiciary responsible for family matters was nationalized and secularized to a considerable degree during the 1950s and early 1960s, insofar as the Muslim population was concerned. The relevant 'personal status codes were promulgated by the Egyptian legislature in conjunction with religious authorities' and the judiciary was turned into 'government officials' and complemented with 'civilly trained judges'. Yet the substance of personal status law remained untouched until 1979, even in the face of a full-blown reform campaign driven by prominent female intellectuals connected with the regime. In vain these women and their supporters demanded that 'the taking of a second wife be subject to a judges' permission'; wanted courts to control decisions over child custody while demanding reforms to the advantage of mothers; and challenged 'wifely obedience as the foundation of marriage', in

35 Bergmann, 'Gebärstreikdebatte'. 36 Molyneux, *Women's Movements*, ch. 3.

37 Reproduced in ICSDW (ed.), *Labour Women of the World* (Manchester: Co-operative Press, 1957), p. 36 (WASI).

particular insofar as the husband's right to have the wife forcibly returned by police to the marital household was concerned.³⁸

The examples discussed here speak to the fact that addressing historically deeply engrained unequal gender relations in the private sphere, including within the lower classes, remained a contentious or delicate issue for numerous socialists. This mirrored both the limited speakability pertaining to many related issues and the power of masculinist interest within socialism.

Politics related to the third pillar of the classical socialist programme of women's emancipation were similarly shaped by tensions between straightforward vision, on the one hand, and retarding and conflicting interests, on the other. This, as well as some of the limitations of this programme, were discernible in relation to all the main dimensions of the politics of women's economic emancipation (and their liberation from capitalist exploitation) through a socialist politics of women's work.

Since, for socialists, women's emancipation meant that the female sex 'will be entirely independent' and not 'subjected to even a trace of domination and exploitation', the demand that women 'should no longer depend for subsistence upon the good will and favour of the other sex'³⁹ was at the core of their foundational programme: women must be put into the position to earn their own living via full and equal participation in the world of work – even if, as some socialists would argue, for the time being this meant exploitation and misery. Economic 'independence' achieved through paid work included access to all professions and sectors of work, equality in vocational training and labour conditions, equal pay, and the full organization of women in trade unions. In anarchist circles, devotion to absolute economic equality mingled with a focus on community and home as (woman-dominated) sites prefiguring the society of the future free from power and competition. In the early days in particular, this, in some cases, produced open hostility to women's wage labour⁴⁰ – a feature of malestream socialism not restricted to anarchism alone.

Against the background of the centrality of the doctrine of women's emancipation through and in the world of paid work, socialist labour activists concerned with the 'women's question' entertained a strong interest in the

38 L. Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity and the State in Nasser's Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), ch. 3.

39 A. Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, Jubilee edn, authorized trans. Meta L. Stern (New York: Socialist Literature Co., 1910), available at www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/index.htm; quotes in the introduction and ch. 18. The book, published in German in 1879 and translated into many languages, was one of the most-read books discussing women and socialism until well into the twentieth century.

40 Nicholas, 'Gender and Sexuality'; van der Walt and Schmidt, *Black Flame*, p. 10.

improvement of the conditions of women workers in those sectors of the labour market marginalized in the de facto politics of malestream socialism. Around the world, domestic workers or 'servants' constituted a vast group of predominantly female workers. Activism ranged from demands to abolish the special servant codes under which these workers laboured, so as to turn their work into 'free labour', to direct action such as in the US city of Denver, Colorado, where the 'rebel girls', around IWW organizer Jane Street, in an unexpected move served their employers the food designated for themselves, the 'servants'.⁴¹

In practice, well into the twentieth century male-dominated labour movements largely ignored or paid lip service alone to many elements of women's emancipation in paid work. When concerned with those better-off world regions and those, mostly white, strata of the populations where the male breadwinner model was thinkable at least in principle, organized labour displayed a 'tremendous ambivalence about women's full-fledged economic citizenship'.⁴² Equal pay was both a key issue and one of those questions where progress within the mainstream labour movement was particularly slow. While backed in principle, all too often there lurked behind this principled commitment a vague vision that equal pay somehow would eliminate the 'undercutting' of male wages via the removal of cheap female labour, or at least married women, regarded as most likely to accept just any wage, from the labour market altogether. Simultaneously, in interwar Europe, socialist parties and trade unions were extremely reluctant to actually pursue a practical politics of equal pay. In wage negotiations they failed, in a period when 'women' were regularly held in a separate wage category besides (implicitly male) skilled and unskilled workers, to demand that women's wages be raised to narrow the glaring gap separating them from (male) unskilled workers. The French Popular Front government did not include equal pay in its foundational Matignon agreement in 1936, although it did at least commit to disproportional wage rises for the lowest wage scales, covering predominantly women. Only after the fall of the Popular Front government, when, under the impact of 'rationalization' and the preparation for war, cheap female labour was driven into the factories en masse, did the CGT, in 1938, come up with its first concrete, narrowly conceived demand for equal pay for identical work.⁴³

41 A. F. Mattina, "'Yours for industrial freedom": women of the IWW, 1905–1930', *Women's Studies: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal* 43, 2 (2014), pp. 170–201 at pp. 182–3.

42 L. L. Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender in the Making of the French Social Model* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 165.

43 On the CGT and equal pay, see M. Poggioli, 'A travail égal, salaire égal'? *La CGT et les femmes au temps du Front populaire. Histoire documentaire* (Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2012).



Fig. 27.1 A massive demonstration celebrating Bastille Day, the victory of the Popular Front at the elections, and the achievements of the May–June strikes, Paris, 14 July 1936. (Photograph by AFP via Getty Images.)

By contrast, from the early days, female trade unionists in many countries played a key role in efforts to turn the demand in principle for equal pay into practical politics. Internationally, the intensified efforts of the IFTU's women's committee in the 1930s to commit the IFTU to pressuring its constituency into a proactive engagement with a practical politics of equal pay did not yield tangible results. After the Second World War, the ILO, in which social democratic trade unions played an important role, finally committed itself to proactive politics. The ILO leadership thereby responded to a 1948 initiative of the communist-dominated WFTU, aiming 'to control the content of equal pay as well as to affirm' the organization's authority to internationally address this question.⁴⁴ In 1951, the ILO adopted its Equal Remuneration Convention Croo. Silke Neunsinger has shown how, from the 1950s onwards, a large international network of female socialist trade unionists in, and within the orbit of, the ICFTU and the ILO tackled the complex task of operationalizing and promoting the politics of equal pay effectively on the international stage.⁴⁵

44 E. Boris, *Making the Woman Worker: Precarious Labour and the Fight for Global Standards, 1919–2019* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 79.

45 S. Neunsinger, 'The Unobtainable Magic of Numbers: Equal Remuneration, the ILO and the International Trade Union Movement 1950s–1980s', in E. Boris, D. Hoehltker,

Motherhood and women's 'special' bodily constitution and (presumed) needs more generally constituted another defining theme of the politics of women's work. It was not until the 1970s that the political mantra of women's inevitable double vocation as 'worker and mother' would be challenged from within socialism by women active in the orbit of the New Left and the second women's movement, on a world scale. The mantra implied that women were to be treated as 'mothers and workers' regardless of their actual status, life plans, and circumstances, and that, by extension, women carried sole responsibility as family workers. Implicitly, the imagined 'worker and mother' thus construed and protected was white and did not belong to the subaltern classes.

Socialists were far from united when discussing, beginning in the nineteenth century, the protection of women workers. One key theme was the scope of women's special exemptions from paid work. While the demand for maternity protection in the narrow sense was mainstream among male and female socialists, nightwork early on formed a bone of contention amongst European female socialist activists. While many were content with women-specific restrictions, others argued that whatever restrictions were put into place had to pertain equally to women and men since sex-specific restrictions were discriminatory and weakened women workers' position against employers. Still others conceived of sex-specific labour protection as a first step towards more protection for all workers.⁴⁶

In the twentieth century, policy scripts aimed at easing the 'double burden' by allowing mothers to stay at home for prolonged periods of time gained significance. In the interwar period one focus was on 'mothers' pensions', often demanded for single mothers of small children, and family allowances. The latter were envisioned as a permanent supplement to the family income and an alternative to the (envisioned) male breadwinner wage, enabling mothers to stay at home or reduce their paid work. Some socialist women feared that the allowances would torpedo the project of women's emancipation through work. Others, among them IFTU trade unionist Hélène Burniaux, wanted the allowances to be paid to the mother, combining the re-evaluation and material appreciation of women's unpaid family work with a move towards improving women's position and power in the family. The politics of the co-operative women's movement involved a strong focus on

and S. Zimmermann (eds.), *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 121–48.

⁴⁶ U. Wikander, A. Kessler-Harris, and J. Lewis (eds.), *Protecting Women: Labour Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

women in the family. The ICWG adopted a 'Housewives' Programme', demanding the '[r]ecognition both in the family, socially, and at law, of the work of the woman in her home as a valuable social and economic service', as well as '[t]he provision through municipalities and Co-operative Societies of all technical aids to housework'.⁴⁷

By the 1960s, the policy instrument of prolonged childcare leave after maternity leave emerged. Socialist women formed a key constituency when the ILO got the Recommendation on the Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities (R 123, 1965), advocating prolonged childcare leave, off the ground. This policy instrument had already taken root in some countries in state-socialist Europe; this was to ease the ever-growing tension around women's 'double burden' that resulted from the fact that the employment rate of women climbed to a mass scale.

Up until this time, many socialists who entertained an interest in an emancipatory politics of women's work did not conceive of demands for women's equality and women's difference in the world of work as contradictory. For them, the goal was to realize women's sex-specific labour protection and labour rights in such a manner that this policy would neither generate material discrimination of the female worker and weaken her position in labour struggles, nor limit her opportunity. Still, as they called for the societal and material recognition of women's unpaid family work, they simultaneously reified this labour as women's work, and seldom addressed men's vested interest in women continuing full responsibility for this work, an interest that consistently informed the related politics of mainstream socialism.

The negotiation of global inequality entered a new phase in socialist pro-women activism after 1945. With the large theme of 'Women in the Underdeveloped Countries', the main subject discussed at the 1955 conference of the ICSDW, a third and last defining element was added to the international socialist politics of women's work. Step by step the vision that women in the Global South were to contribute to catch-up development as paid workers made its way into the circles of internationally organized socialist women. Political independence was considered a precondition for development. 'It is an independent state', argued Nigerian Fola Ighodalo in an ICSDW booklet published in 1957 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of socialist women's international organizing, 'that must take steps to develop the economy of the country'.⁴⁸ By the 1960s, the ICFTU women's committee

47 ICWG, Report of the Committee, 1930–1934, Hull History Centre, Records of the ICWG. U DCX/3/6. The quote is from the draft programme.

48 ICSDW, *Labour Women*, p. 34.

developed a strong focus on training African women as trade union leaders and promoting African women's education and vocational training. The committee, which closely collaborated with Agnes Adenowo of the Women's Advisory Committee within Nigeria's United Labour Congress, 'foresaw an irreversible' trend towards higher rates of female employment, 'as irreversible as the aspiration of the peoples for independence', and warned that women would become a "dead weight" on development – which was to be sustained by organized labour – 'if they were left out'. According to historian Yvette Richards, the foot-dragging of the ICFTU regarding this task would indeed have dire consequences in the subsequent neoliberal 'period of massive global economic restructuring fuelled by cheap female labour'.⁴⁹

Towards the end of the twentieth century, both socialist catch-up developmentalism and the programme of women-specific labour protection were dismantled. Socialist catch-up developmentalism in the Global South lost traction well before it could reach a stage when female labour force reserves would be exhausted. It was therefore the case that the state-socialist world became the first place where, from the 1960s onwards, the shortcomings and pitfalls of the socialist idea of emancipating women through integration into paid work as translated into catch-up development would be exposed. This project relied on an instrumental utilization of masses of often unskilled women workers, left untouched the inherited socialist mantra of the 'worker and mother', and generated, under the circumstances of material scarcity, an unbearable multiple burden for many women.

Within the socialist movements the classical socialist paradigm of women's emancipation through paid work came under attack beginning in the 1960s. Women identifying with and developing a left-feminist critique of the New Left, and left-wing women in the second women's movement played an important role.⁵⁰ They wanted radical change in the domestic sphere and matters related to reproductive freedom, and reconceptualized the relationship between paid and unpaid labour. The slogan 'Paid work doesn't make us free' epitomized a newly emerging radical critique of the vision of emancipation through paid work in either market or socialist societies. Representatives of the – rather short-lived and controversial –

49 Richards, 'Labor's gendered misstep', esp. pp. 416–17, 424–5, 441–2.

50 G. Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); B. Molony and J. Nelson (eds.), *Women's Activism and Second Wave Feminism: Transnational Histories* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

transnational campaign for 'wages for' or 'against housework'⁵¹ rejected Old and New Left modernist and developmentalist concepts of liberation. The masculinist left, they argued, clung to an 'ideology . . . which equates wagelessness and low technological development with political backwardness, with absolute lack of power . . . We refuse to accept that, while a male auto worker in Detroit can struggle against the assembly line, starting from our kitchens in the metropolis or from the Third World our goal must be that factory work which workers all over the world are increasingly refusing.'⁵²

In the 1970s and 1980s, numerous women indeed endeavoured to live the revolution of both home and work. It could be argued that this new activism built on, revived, and probably 'widened-expanded' those more far-reaching socialist concepts and practices of women's and human emancipation that can be detected in the long history of women's contributions to Saint-Simonism, the IWMA, and the broad anarchist-syndicalist tradition and related more radical socialist movements. In several countries, this new departure in socialist feminist thinking and action developed in tandem with forms of co-operation with women who remained aligned to the ICSDW – renamed Socialist International Women in 1978 – and now began to broaden their scope of action. For a brief moment in history, activists felt that a full, emancipatory transformation of gender and class relations might finally become possible. Indeed, the formal and legal individuation of women made great strides during this period in the world beyond the state-socialist countries. Yet second-wave feminism soon developed a tendency to 'lose class', and the labour movement lost both strength and many of those mostly female radicals who are needed to successfully combine progressive class and gender politics. As a result, today we live with a worldwide acceptance (if contested again and again) of the idea of gender equality, which would have been unimaginable in the nineteenth century, yet the promise of female and human emancipation remains unfulfilled.

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51 M. A. Bracke, 'Between the transnational and the local: mapping the trajectories and contexts of the wages for housework campaign in 1970s Italian feminism', *Women's History Review* 22, 4 (2013), pp. 625–42.

52 N. Cox and S. Federici, *Counter-Planning from the Kitchen: Wages for Housework. A Perspective on Capital and the Left* (New York: Wages for Housework Committee and Falling Wall Press, 1975), p. 3, available at https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/counter-planning_from_the_kitchen.pdf.

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Socialism and Ecology

TED BENTON

Introduction

From the end of the Second World War, the Cold War rivalry between the formally communist 'East' and the liberal democratic 'West' took several forms – prestige projects, such as space exploration, advances in military technology, and sporting prowess. Above all, the contest was about demonstrating the power of the rival socio-economic systems to deliver sustained economic growth, ever-rising material living standards, and consumer choice. In most Western countries, there was a parallel consensus between the main parties of left and right about the central purpose of public policy. Economic growth and rising living standards were the shared priorities of both conservative and social democratic parties, with relatively minor differences over the extent of welfare provision, the role of state support for industry, and workers' rights.

However, from the late 1950s there were significant expressions of dissent, both East and West, and a rise to prominence of issues previously regarded as marginal – women's rights, not just in the workplace, but also in the domestic sphere, a new politics of diversity in sexual orientation, anti-racism, international development, and opposition to both nuclear power and weapons of mass destruction. From the 1960s, especially, social movements mobilizing significant publics around these issues came to dominate civil society in Europe, the United States, Australasia, and other 'developed' countries. In general, these issues could be assimilated as currents within the mainstream parties of the left and centre-left.

At the same time, and often conceptually linked with that other range of concerns, there were worries about the negative impact on the natural environment of the economic success story: economic growth, industrialization, and 'the consumer society'. Deforestation, flooding, pollution, and biodiversity loss, long suffered by populations in poorer countries, came to

be seen, in the rich countries too, as potentially threatening on a global scale. A series of devastating oil spills, with images of thousands of birds covered in burning, debilitating oil on Western TV screens, evoked compassionate outrage in many. In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* burst on an already receptive world.¹ Her work served to spread knowledge and alarm about the unseen diffusion of agricultural toxins far beyond their points of application, their deadly consequences for wildlife, and the insidious damage they were causing to human health. These fears that something had gone radically wrong in human relations with the natural world gave rise to what came to be recognized as an environmental movement, and its scope came soon to be enlarged by accidents in nuclear power stations, and, in 1982, the discovery of a 'hole' in the Earth's protective ozone layer.

During the 1970s social and political movements concerned with environmental issues acquired new philosophical foundations, and also, in many countries, new political forms, in the shape of green parties. Although these parties were at pains to insist that their scope covered all public policy domains, they were defined externally by what made them different: the grounding of their policies in a transformed relation to (the rest of) nature. By now the thinkers of the new movements were extensively using the term 'ecology' to characterize their approach. The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess insisted upon a 'deep ecological' as distinct from a 'shallow ecological' philosophy; the term 'political ecology' came into widespread use; in Australia, Robyn Eckersley defended a philosophy of 'ecocentrism'; in Britain, the precursor of its Green Party called itself the 'Ecology Party'; and a new version of radical feminism defined itself as 'ecofeminism'.²

Ecology was, and is, a scientific discipline, so how did it lend itself so readily to political assimilation? Reputedly, the term was invented by the nineteenth-century German evolutionist Ernst Haeckel, but the concept is clearly present in earlier work, notably in Darwin's understanding of the complex of environmental conditions that favour more adapted, and eliminated less adapted, organic forms. In its modern standing as a scientific discipline, ecology is the study of the inter-relationships between organisms and their living and non-living conditions of life. Populations of particular species

1 R. Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962; London, Penguin, 1965).

2 A. Naess, 'The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement', *Inquiry* 16 (1973), pp. 95–100; A. Naess and D. Rothenberg, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); R. Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: University College London Press, 1992); M. Mellor, *Breaking the Boundaries: Towards a Feminist Green Socialism* (London: Virago, 1992); V. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993).

are found coexisting, often interdependently, with populations of other species to form 'communities', interacting with non-living conditions, the whole being characterized as an 'ecosystem'. The focus of study might be the properties of the system so formed, and the functional relations between the diverse species present – as 'producers' or 'decomposers', parasites and hosts, and so on, or it might be the population of a particular species and its relations to its living and non-living conditions.

In Naess' version of deep ecology the key borrowing is a normative one: the interdependence of populations and species is such that to restrict intrinsic value to just one (i.e., the human species) is irrational, so moral value must be assigned also to the non-human living world. As 'richness and diversity' are necessary to ecosystems, so preservation of these must be taken to constrain human interference in the non-human world. We have no right to reduce that richness and diversity, except to satisfy 'vital needs'. For Naess, the flourishing of the non-human world was consistent with a reduction of the human population, but some others took this further and notoriously advocated a reduction in human population (sometimes specifying the use of 'humane' means). Though green parties rarely committed themselves to the full programme of deep ecology, they were sufficiently influenced by it to be seen as opposed to economic growth, in favour of protection of nature, and replacing the goal of affluence with the achievement of life quality.

So, the general thrust of ecological politics stood in sharp contradiction to the central and consensual priority of 'mainstream' politics – of both right and left. In fact, a common slogan of green parties was 'Neither left nor right, but straight ahead'. For many who were attracted to green politics, growing evidence of impending ecological catastrophe meant that other political objectives, no matter how justified, had to be subordinated to the ecological emergency.

The emergence of green parties and philosophies from the 1970s onwards was greeted with strong resistance, not only from the right, but also from the left. For those on the centre-left who saw the injustices of inequality and poverty as the key issues, the ecologists' subordination of them was seen as a distraction, often one designed to protect elite life-styles from developments essential to the improvement of working-class lives. For the more radical, socialist left, the ecologists' concern with population rather than consumption verged on the racist, and their opposition to 'industrialism' failed to see that the problem was not industrialism as such, but its capitalist form.

Given so deep a contradiction of values and purposes, the prospects for a convergence of red and green politics might seem very slim. But by the beginning of the twenty-first century just such a convergence was well under way. In most countries green parties were clearly aligned on the left of the political spectrum, while both social democratic and socialist parties of the left either included strong red–green currents, or had adopted policies that synthesized red and green elements. For example, the UK Labour Party, at the 1983 general election, was described as having ‘nothing of any significance to say about any of the major environmental issues’, but at the local level the Greater London Council, under the leadership of Ken Livingstone (1981–6), could be described by the same authors as implementing ‘the most radical green policies yet seen in mainstream British politics’.³ At national level, the 2019 *Manifesto* of the UK Labour Party included as central to its transformative vision proposals for a ‘Green Industrial Revolution’. Even after an election defeat and under a new leader, the overwhelming majority of the party’s members still supported that priority.

Greens and the Left: From Division to Rapprochement

From Global Crisis to ‘Sustainable Development’

The rise of independent green parties from the late 1970s was initially inspired by electoral successes of the West German Green Party, and across western Europe newly formed green parties gained elected office where proportional representation or devolved administrations provided the necessary opportunities for a minority party. In Belgium, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, and Luxembourg greens had made significant inroads by the late 1980s. In eastern Europe there was little opportunity for green activism until the opening of Soviet civil society under Gorbachev in the late 1980s. In the United States there was no over-arching green party at national level, but rather a rich diversity of environmental activism with informal links and networks across the states. Elsewhere there were widely celebrated popular movements, notably the Chipko struggles against commercial logging in north India and the fight against deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. The overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua in 1981 by the Sandinista movement, and their initiation of an ecological approach to economic development, offered a source of optimism for greens – albeit

3 J. Porritt and D. Winner, *The Coming of the Greens* (London: Fontana, 1988).

a short-lived one as US-backed 'contra' forces brought the experiment to a stop by the end of the 1980s.

In 1972, a publishing event transformed the prospects of ecological politics and brought its concerns into the mainstream of public debate. The Club of Rome's report, *The Limits to Growth*, sounded deep alarm about the future consequences for humankind of unchecked growth patterns in the global system.⁴ The instigators of the report were a group of scientists, technocrats, business advisers, and others with little affinity to the radicals of the green movement, but the central message of the report confirmed their claims. We were heading for global catastrophe unless urgent action was taken. The report deployed what was then an advanced computer model, and presented its findings with diagrams, numbers, and graphs. It had all the authority of a scientific study, and it spoke of the need for a fully global response. Exponential growth in five interconnected parameters – industry, agriculture, population, use of renewable and non-renewable resources, and pollution – would lead to 'overshoot' and collapse within a century unless a situation of 'balance' or steady-state could be reached.

The report was widely misunderstood, or misrepresented, as a prophecy, rather than as a warning, and the world-system model itself was subjected to some serious criticisms. Some on the left saw it as a resurrection of the notorious 'law of population' advanced at the end of the eighteenth century by the cleric/economist Thomas Malthus (see below). What rather few of the report's critics on the left noticed was that its models for a future balance between human needs and the ecological capacity of the Earth took as their unquestioned assumption that capital investment would be controlled, both in scale and in kind, according to socially established purposes. That this also applied to population growth suggested an authoritarian–technocratic impulse, but it did not detract from the implicit incompatibility between the report and the prevailing capitalist organization of the economy.

The *Limits* report stimulated widespread public debate about an ecological crisis of global proportions, but this had little reach beyond the already-industrialized nations. Attempts to build international collaboration for environmental protection were forced to recognize the importance of resistance from poorer countries, whose priorities were to alleviate poverty, even if it meant doing to their environments what the rich countries had already done to theirs. A United Nations conference on the global environment in

4 D. H. Meadows, D. L. Meadows, J. Randers, and W. W. Behrens, *The Limits to Growth* (London: Pan, 1972).

1972 began the process of linking environmental policy with development, and led to the establishment in Nairobi of the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP). There followed a series of meetings culminating in the report of the 'World Commission on Environment and Development' (WCED) and the 'Earth Summit' of 1992.⁵

The WCED Report highlighted a paradox – the economic growth that was needed to address poverty would, on the basis of 'business as usual', intensify the crisis of ecology. The UN report squared that circle with a concept: 'sustainable development'. This was to be development to meet the needs of today, without undermining the conditions for future generations to meet their needs. This idea was subsequently parasitized, appropriated by capital, degraded, and misused but the core idea was very radical. The purpose of investment was to meet need (not 'consumer demand') and, by implication, the needs of the poorest would get priority (not the needs of those with the spending power). Investment would be constrained by the requirement not to damage the natural or social conditions for future production (an environmental constraint, and a bar on discounting the future). What the original concept of sustainable development required was a global investment regime governed by norms of moral responsibility, concern for the wellbeing of future generations, and respect for nature. In other words, it was by implication profoundly anti-capitalist. Nevertheless, it formed the basis for the Earth Summit in 1992. Pressured by massed protesters, the delegates succeeded in making agreements on two of the most pressing environmental issues: a 'framework convention' on climate change and the biodiversity convention, both of them legally binding on signatories, and both of them implying that the costs of global protection would be borne mainly by the rich countries, with benefits for the poor.

Sustainability Cancelled: Neoliberal Globalization

Meanwhile, the 'Uruguay round' of negotiations on the regulations governing international trade and investment was taking place. This was far from anti-capitalist. Indeed, its purpose, through the WTO, IMF, and World Bank was to open the world to ever-more profitable exploitation by corporate capital, to progressively remove governmental, social, or environmental restraints on investment and trade. Many of the limits implied in the notion

5 World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); W. M. Adams, *Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in the Third World* (London: Routledge, 1990); M. Grubb, M. Koch, A. Munson, F. Sullivan, and K. Thomson, *The Earth Summit Agreements* (London: Earthscan and RIIA, 1993).

of sustainability would be defined as restraints of trade and rendered illegal. Subsequent recall conferences of the Earth Summit and of the parties to the conventions were increasingly dominated by corporate interests, while the idea of sustainability was raided by a new brand of neoliberal environmental economics. Development was sustainable if it gave rise to an increase in 'total capital', and a decline in 'natural capital' could be justified if it were compensated for by growth in 'human-made capital' – in other words, you can wreck nature as long as you get rich by doing it. The ideas could be adjusted to avoid such dire implications through notions of 'critical natural capital' and 'irreversible natural capital', but once nature had been defined as 'capital' it was drawn within the net of economic valuation, cost–benefit calculation, and commodity exchange.

In subsequent decades the global pre-eminence of neoliberal economic ideology went along with increasing power of global corporate capital, intensified transformations of natural and semi-natural ecosystems, and shifts of land-use from domestic food production in poorer countries to industrial agricultural production of crops such as soy, palm oil, coffee, and cocoa for rich country consumption. Tropical moist forests, centres of concentration for biodiversity as well as global carbon stores, have been decimated for monoculture production and cattle farming. Some 75 per cent of natural and semi-natural habitats have been converted to agriculture and other uses, while intensive agriculture itself, along with transport, industrial production, extractive industries, and even digital technologies have all contributed to unremitting increases in emissions of greenhouse gases. Many vestiges of national state regulation of environmental exploitation through legislation have been displaced in favour of marketized systems such as carbon trading and so-called natural capital accounting, which at best internalize some of the external costs of production, without significantly mitigating them. The theoretical commodification of nature through the concept of natural capital has been an effective means of bringing formerly independent, and sometimes oppositional, environmental organizations into close collaboration with neoliberal governments and corporate capital.

Rapprochement of Greens and the Left?

The increasing association of climate change denial with the political right and the inescapably growing salience of environmental issues, together with the inseparable intertwining of environmental and social justice issues, globally and locally, prompted many on the left to begin a critical reflection on the socialist heritage. For those on the Marxist left, both inside and outside the

communist parties, that reflection had already been prompted by increased knowledge of the abuses of 'actually existing' communism and by the ruthlessly oppressive treatment of attempts to create alternative versions of socialism in the eastern bloc. A non-aligned radical left existed in most European countries, and many of the orthodox communist parties were forced into rethinking their mission by the eventual fall of the Soviet Union and its satellites from 1989. For the more centrist social democratic parties, the electoral challenge of the green parties, where they existed, led to some accommodation in terms of policy shifts and, in some cases, to attempts at coalition.

According to a study of European social democratic party programmes in the post-war period, there was little sign of concern about environmental issues until the 1970s. Even then this shift was largely confined to the Dutch PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid) and the Swiss SPS (Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz). Four more parties shifted to more ecological positions in the 1980s, notably the social democratic parties of Sweden (Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti, SAP) and Finland (Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue, SDP), followed by a further five parties in the 1990s, most significantly the German SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands). In general, this study suggests that the social democratic parties of northern Europe and those of the German-speaking countries of central Europe were most likely to adopt ecological themes in their programmes, while those of southern Europe and the British Isles showed little change. To the left of these mass parties are smaller, but often still electorally significant parties, some of which continue as communist or reform-communist parties, while others are unaligned socialist parties. One study of this grouping of radical left parties (RLPs) finds an uneven shift towards the centre since the fall of east European communism in 1989, but interestingly this seems to have been reversed since the financial crisis of 2008. The study also found a marked shift towards 'New Left' or 'post-materialist' issues, especially among Nordic parties, and a more general shift in favour of ecological themes. A more broadly based study which included east European RLPs and compared the socialist left parties with green parties also noted the greater significance of environmental issues in the Nordic RLPs, while finding, unsurprisingly, that the green parties still gave a much more central role to transformed relations to nature than did the RLPs.⁶

6 A. Fagerholm, 'Social democratic parties and the rise of ecologism: a comparative analysis of western Europe', *Comparative European Politics* 14 (2016), pp. 547–71; A. Fagerholm, 'What is left for the radical left? A comparative examination of the policies of radical left parties in western Europe before and after 1989', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25, 1 (2017), pp. 16–40; C. Wang and D. Keith, 'The

These studies offer explanations of the varied patterns of accommodation or resistance to emerging green and environmental politics in terms of party competition, the decline of a 'traditional' working-class base for left politics, the rise of a section of the electorate attracted by 'post-materialist' values, the internal structures of the parties, the attitudes of their members, and so on. Another significant factor must also be the nature of the electoral system. In the United Kingdom, for example, the 'first-past-the-post' system has meant that many of the conflicts that would, in other countries, have been played out between rival political parties have been conducted through internal struggles. To some extent, also, these shifts in favour of more nature-friendly policies may have come from increased influence of minority traditions with a long history of association with social democratic politics, most notably the international grouping of 'Friends of Nature', or 'Naturfreunde', which has encouraged practical engagement with and love of nature through outdoor activities since its foundation in Austria in 1895.

Rethinking Socialism

No doubt, as these studies argue, many of these green shifts on the part of left parties have been to a degree strategic, pragmatic, and even opportunistic. However, the empirical methods employed are not well suited to the task of understanding the deeper-level philosophical and theoretical re-structuring of inherited socialist traditions that was occurring during this period, which underpinned much of the policy change. In part this was a matter of new and creative thinking, but it more often took the form of recovery of earlier, and sometimes forgotten, theoretical traditions and practices on the left.

One important resource was the school of philosophers and social scientists that formed in Frankfurt during the 1920s and early 1930s. The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, under the leadership of Max Horkheimer, was committed to a radical reappraisal of the legacy of German social thought, most especially that of Marx and Hegel, in the context of the advance of authoritarianism in the East, and the rise of the Nazis in Germany. The school was dispersed when the Nazis came to power, and most of the leading figures settled in the United States. Perhaps the most influential of their writings in exile was *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.⁷ In this complex and difficult work they argue that while 'enlightenment' promises autonomy and liberty,

greening of European radical left parties: red and green politics', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 28 (2020), pp. 494–513.

7 T. W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Seabury, 1972).

it also contains the seeds of domination and totalitarianism. A key part of this argument is their identification of scientific reason as a form of means/ends or instrumental reason. For them, science is intrinsically connected to the domination of nature, by way of a dichotomy between humans as subjects, with agency, and the mere objectivity of nature, as material upon which humans are free to impose their will. This 'disenchantment' of nature is the basis for a consequent domination over humans themselves, both socially and in their subjective life.

This critique of the domination of nature was presented as a contribution to the understanding of the rise of totalitarianism, and not, at that time, as an ecological critique. However, themes drawn from these and other critical theorists were widespread in the radical cultural shifts that took place in the 1960s, and Herbert Marcuse, a leading member of the group, who remained in the United States, has a good case to be considered one of the pioneers in the twentieth-century attempt to bring together ecological thinking and socialism. Unlike Horkheimer and Adorno, Marcuse did not see domination as intrinsic to scientific-technical rationality. For him, both science and technology had developed to a point where exploitation, poverty, and alienated labour were no longer required, but in their capitalist form they perpetuated human oppression, waste, and destruction of nature through the inculcation of an addiction in the underlying population to the desires and pleasures of the consumer society. But this mechanism had its geographical limits: 'This society is obscene in producing and indecently exposing a stifling abundance of wares while depriving its victims abroad of the necessities of life; obscene in stuffing itself and its garbage cans while poisoning and burning the scarce foodstuffs in the fields of its aggression.' It also had its internal limits, which Marcuse recognized in the rebellions and cultural changes of the 1960s. The emergence of a new aesthetics, a sensibility incompatible with the prevailing system, was a necessary condition for change, and could not be limited by classical Marxist notions of class struggle. The demands of the nascent ecology movement are endorsed: 'History is also grounded in nature. And Marxist theory has the least justification to ignore the metabolism between the human being and nature.'⁸

There were others on the left in Europe during this period who were also open to the arguments of the greens. André Gorz, for example, a French

8 H. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1969); H. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston: Beacon, 1978).

radical who had become disillusioned with the hope for a revolutionary working class, turned to the ecological crisis as the spur to a transformed world. His *Ecology as Politics* contained one of the few accounts of what an ecological socialist society might be.⁹ The economy would have a dual character: a formal sector would produce necessary goods in standardized versions to meet the needs of all, and using technologies that could be controlled by the direct producers at the level of the neighbourhood, and were not harmful to the environment. This would reduce the hours of work required for the provision of necessities, and a universal basic income would provide opportunities for the development of the informal sector, neighbourhood volunteering for care of the sick and elderly, contributing to the education of children, and so on, as well as participating in freely creative work in locally provided studios and workshops.

Rudolf Bahro, from the former East Germany, produced a powerful critique of the Soviet and east European systems, refusing to recognize them as socialist, but shortly thereafter, as a refugee in West Germany, becoming a radical critic of his newly experienced Western society. In his *Alternative in Eastern Europe* and in his subsequent speeches and writings in the West, he identified strongly with the green, or ecology, movement and called for a realignment of green and socialist movements.¹⁰ Western consumerism was seen as based on false or compensatory needs, evoked by alienation from work and from nature. Bahro was in many ways a forerunner of later Marxist writers who recovered a lost ecological message especially in Marx's early work.

The German poet and dramatist Hans Magnus Enzensberger, too, combined a Marxist critique of the ideology of ecological politics with a serious early attempt to meet the ecological challenge with a rethinking of the Marxian tradition itself.¹¹ These writer-activists were a rather small minority but they still formed a significant international grouping who were reworking traditional socialist ideas, informed not only by the issues highlighted by the greens, but also by their innovative styles of campaigning and their alternative values and structures of feeling. UK Marxist Raymond Williams

9 A. Gorz, *Ecology as Politics* (London: Pluto, 1983), a collection first published as *Ecologie et Politique* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1980).

10 R. Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: New Left Books, 1978), first published as *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Cologne: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977); R. Bahro, *Socialism and Survival* (London: Heretic, 1982).

11 H. M. Enzensberger, 'A critique of political ecology', *New Left Review* 84 (1974), pp. 3–31; reprinted in T. Benton (ed.), *The Greening of Marxism* (New York: Guilford, 1996).

was among this group, as were others, some of whom who came together in the UK's Red–Green Study Group, and subsequently became linked with an international eco-socialist network. Other socialists, including Marxists, went on to play leading roles within the green political parties themselves.¹²

The Anarchist Legacy: Community and Locality

Many thinkers on the left envisaged a society-wide transformation, often involving extensive state intervention, to address ecological crisis. Co-existing with this, and often intertwined with it, there was another tendency of thought which diagnosed the problem as deriving from a mismatch between large-scale societal decision-making and the day-by-day practices of interaction with nature. Surely, smaller, self-sufficient, and autonomous communities would be better able to monitor and so regulate their impact on their immediate surroundings? This approach was able to look back into history, and pre-history, for sources of inspiration.

In pre-industrial (or, for some, indigenous) rural communities, people were closer both to one another and to the (rest of) the natural world. Life was governed by the regularities of day, night, climate, and season, survival depended on mutual trust and co-operation, and use of natural resources was consciously managed with an eye to the future. In this view, small was both beautiful and sustainable. A future environmentally sustainable society would have to be devolved into small, self-sufficient communities, adapting their production and consumption to the physical and biological affordances of the land they inhabited. In some versions, scientific–technical rationality was to be rejected in favour of a cultural, spiritual – even religious – connection with the rest of nature. Although these ideas acquired a new salience in the debates of the 1970s, they were by no means new. The Digger movement in the English Civil War appropriated plots of land and laid claim to it by virtue of their communal labour, and much later revulsion at the poverty and pollution associated with the Industrial Revolution gave rise to a romantic celebration of the medieval world in the thinking of the pre-Raphaelites and of the Arts and Crafts movement, with its figurehead William Morris – also

12 R. Williams, 'Socialism and Ecology', in R. Williams, *Resources of Hope*, ed. R. Gable (London: Verso, 1989); T. Benton, 'Ecology, socialism and the mastery of nature', *New Left Review* 194 (1992), pp. 55–74; P. Dickens, *Society and Nature* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1992); T. Benton, *Natural Relations* (London: Verso, 1993); Red–Green Study Group, *What on Earth Is to Be Done?* (Manchester: Red–Green Study Group, 1995); P. Devine, *Democracy and Economic Planning* (London: Polity, 2010); D. Wall, *Getting There: Steps to a Green Society* (London: Merlin, 1990).

a leading Marxist militant in the later years of the nineteenth century, and an inspiration for modern eco-socialists.

The vision of a radically decentralized society, organized into ‘villages of co-operation’ was actively promoted by the pioneering British socialist Robert Owen in the early decades of the nineteenth century. As a successful factory manager, Owen was given control of a large cotton-spinning mill in New Lanark, Scotland. The site included accommodation for 2,000 inhabitants, mostly workers in the mill, and Owen also brought in children from workhouses and took control of their education. A paternalistic system of positive moral incentives in the workplace, combined with an enlightened educational programme for the children, was widely seen as highly successful in overcoming class divisions and enhancing productivity. However, Owen became disillusioned by his inability to get his ideas taken on by the wider class of business owners, and turned to advocacy of his vision through books and talks, addressed increasingly to working-class audiences.

Although Owen came to be recognized as one of the founding thinkers of modern socialism, his notion of villages of co-operation was primarily aimed at fostering social harmony and co-operation, together with inculcating moral values and dispositions through reformed education. Apart from encouraging appreciation of the countryside among the children, the villages were not primarily conceived as the basis for a transformed relation to nature.

Alfred Russel Wallace, who was to become celebrated as co-founder with Darwin of the theory of evolution by natural selection, was an early convert to Owenite socialism while working as an apprentice surveyor.¹³ Much later in his life, Wallace returned to more radical politics, initially as a leading advocate of land nationalization.

By 1890, Wallace had been (re-)converted to socialism by the visionary account of a highly centralized system presented in two works by the American socialist Edward Bellamy (1889, 1902). Local government reforms in the 1890s, which gave a degree of power and democratic accountability to local councils, offered a new possibility: land could be redistributed to councils to meet the needs of local populations. Ebenezer Howard’s powerful advocacy of garden cities in 1898 was exactly what Wallace needed to complete his vision of a decentralized, locally based socialism that respected individual liberty and resisted the centralized power of national government.

¹³ T. Benton, *Alfred Russel Wallace: Explorer, Evolutionist and Public Intellectual: A Thinker for Our Own Times?* (Manchester: Siri Scientific, 2013); M. Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian: The Evolution of Alfred Russel Wallace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); G. Beccaloni, Wallace website, available at <http://wallacefund.info>.

Moreover, Howard's notion of settlements surrounded by allotments, hospitals, and schools, as well as green spaces with woodlands, waterfalls, and reservoirs, added a deeper environmental dimension to the Owenite concept of villages of co-operation. But, as Wallace insisted, these ideas could be realized only on the basis of public ownership of the land. These ideas later found some, albeit attenuated, application in the Town and Country Planning legislation of the UK's Labour government following the Second World War.¹⁴

More radical versions of decentralization and local autonomy have been especially influential in contemporary versions of ecological politics, drawing upon a broad tradition of anarchist thought and practice. This tradition rejects externally imposed authority, especially when that takes the form of the modern nation-state, but it also denies the view of human nature as essentially selfish and competitive. Social order is a spontaneous outcome of the co-operative interactions between free humans. The Russian anarchist Kropotkin is perhaps the most influential figure in this tradition. For him, writing around the end of the nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century, historical and anthropological evidence supports the notion that where humans have lived in small communities they have generally thrived through an ethic of mutual aid, with common rules and forms of authority emergent from the spontaneous order. Though, like most anarchists, a critic of the newly dominant industrial order, he was not opposed to technical advances as such. Indeed, he argues that humans have acquired such power over the productive forces of nature that alienating specialized labour could now be abandoned in favour of fulfilling, creative, and collaborative work. Production could now be conducted to meet the unsatisfied needs of the producers, rather than for the rent, profit, or interest of the 'shareholders, directors and promoters' from the production of 'shoddy, useless or noxious goods'. With appropriate improvements to the soil, agriculture could provide fulfilling work for all and meet the needs of families. As agriculture 'calls manufactures into existence', and manufactures in turn support agriculture, factories should be located next to and integrated with the fields. Every such combination, at whatever scale, should both produce and consume most of its own agricultural and manufactured goods. His vision was of a decentralized society in which industrial production would be integrated

14 See, for example, D. Bangs, *The Land of the Brighton Line* (Portsmouth: Bangs, 2018); M. Cocker, *Our Place* (London: Vintage, 2018); G. Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), on the continuing struggle over land ownership, ecology, and access in the United Kingdom.

with agriculture, local communities would be self-sufficient, and the concentration of the population into the cities resisted.¹⁵

Kropotkin's ideas were particularly influential among subsequent environmental theorists in the United States, and were developed most fully in the 'social ecology' of Murray Bookchin. Bookchin's voluminous writings include a distinctive environmental philosophy, a philosophical history of human alienation from nature, a theoretical explanation of environmental crisis, and a description of the egalitarian and ecological society of the future. His 'dialectical naturalism' derives from some of the same philosophical sources as Marxian dialectics – but takes him to a very different politics. For Bookchin, co-operation, mutualism, and creativity are inherent aspects of the natural world, and so evolution is seen as a process of ever-growing diversity of organisms in networks of interdependence. This process gives rise to the emergence of increasingly complex organisms, culminating in the arrival of humans, as nature becomes self-conscious. But in their own history, humans move from co-operative, organic communities through successive phases of ever-more complex and oppressive forms of hierarchy and domination – reaching a climax in the class societies of contemporary capitalism. The emergence and consolidation of hierarchy and domination in human societies produce what Bookchin calls 'epistemologies of rule', which legitimate both hierarchy and domination within human society and the domination of external nature. Human history so far is thus a history of estrangement and antagonism between humans and nature. The purpose of social ecology is to enable an egalitarian, decentralized, and libertarian revolution not just against capitalism, but against all forms of inequality that have become intertwined with it. Overcoming domination within society will remove the main sources of domination over nature, and restore a harmonious re-entry of humans into nature.¹⁶

But this is not a 'return to nature' as if the historical process had achieved nothing – Bookchin remains committed to a notion of emergent 'civilization', and sees no reason to forgo the technical advances that could improve human lives, detached from the orders of domination that engendered them. Unlike the Arcadian and 'primitivist' versions of ecological anarchism that proliferated from the 1960s, Bookchin was allied to radical urban social movements in the United States, and his thinking was close to that of Ebenezer Howard and

15 P. Kropotkin, *Fields, Farms, Factories and Workshops* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1899).

16 M. Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1991); D. F. White, *Bookchin: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Pluto, 2008).

Patrick Geddes. The vision of the future ecological society was one of a form of urban living 'on a human scale', in which communities of active citizens planned their cities through forms of direct democracy, and took the best from both urban and rural life.

Much of Bookchin's language, and not a little of his schematic view of history, invites comparison with the more pervasive tradition on the radical left – that of Marxism. Bookchin was himself attracted to Marxism in his early years, but became increasingly estranged from and polemically hostile to it. For him, Marx, as well as many on the contemporary left, including social democrats, relied on a view of nature as stingy, cruel, competitive, and resistant to our needs, such that domination over it was necessary for human welfare, even survival. He quotes from Marx's *Grundrisse* as evidence for Marx's apparent welcoming of capitalism's displacement of religious worship of nature in favour of a view of nature as 'simply an object for mankind, purely a matter of utility'.¹⁷ The appeal by liberal and social democratic environmentalists to the centralized state to address ecological problems is merely to intensify the problems. According to Bookchin, the notion that human wellbeing depends on ever-more powerful domination over nature is shared by both state-centralist communism and Western social democracy. The focus of the 'orthodox' left on class struggle against capitalism fails to go deeper to an understanding of the role of all forms of hierarchy and domination, based on age, gender, ethnicity, or, indeed, species.

The Legacy of Marx and Engels: Prometheans or Ecological Pioneers?

The view that both ('actually existing') socialism and capitalism are inevitably committed to ever-growing exploitation and domination of nature has been widespread among greens, with the dire environmental record of Soviet and east European countries as evidence. However, as we saw above, there were already some socialists, including Marxists, who were recovering and developing alternative, more ecologically benign, versions of socialism.

The legacy of Marx and Engels, as the most pervasive intellectual resource for both communist and social democratic versions of modern socialism, necessarily becomes the key focus for rethinking socialism in the face of ecological crisis. As we have seen, the rise of radical ecological movements

17 M. Bookchin and D. Foreman, *Defending the Earth* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1991); K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 410.

posed a serious challenge to the 'traditional' left, with its commitment to economic development and technical advances to provide for the needs of all. Radical ecology, most starkly in its neo-Malthusian '*Limits*' versions, demonstrated the dire consequences of the growth dynamic on a global scale: catastrophic collision with the outer limits of the earth's carrying capacity.

The realignment of the left and the greens that took place from the latter part of the twentieth century, especially in western Europe, arose from new understandings of the connection between accelerating ecological damage and a specifically capitalist economic system. Many greens were pushed into a critical relation to capitalism, while many reds came to acknowledge the existential threat posed by the ecological crisis, especially the threat of climate change. These shifts have, in turn, necessitated a re-examination of the Marxian legacy, one informed by the insights of modern scientific ecology. Within this nexus there are two broad orientations. The first is led by a group of US Marxist scholars associated with the *Monthly Review*, of whom John Bellamy Foster is the most prolific and best-known. Their re-examination of Marx and Engels and their followers reveals them as consistently ecological thinkers, simply misrepresented by their defenders and critics alike. The second orientation finds crucial, indispensable insights in the Marxian tradition, but argues that these need to be disentangled from other, less helpful features, and developed further in the light of developments since the deaths of the founding figures. This second group is more geographically dispersed, and varied in its conclusions, but here I will focus on the ideas of another American writer, the late Jim O'Connor.

First, a brief review of the works of Marx and Engels themselves. For those who see anti-ecological aspects of the work of Marx and Engels, key evidence is found in their critique of Malthus, particularly in passages of the *Communist Manifesto*, and some formulations in Marx's *Capital*. Malthus' 'law of population' was anathema to progressive thinkers, then and now. The rate of growth of population, he argued, necessarily outstripped the ability to increase the food supply: poverty, disease, and premature death were unavoidable features of the human predicament. Marx and Engels argued that poverty was a consequence of the capitalists' need of a 'reserve army of labour', that population growth was subject to human agency, but also that the great majority of the Earth's surface remained uncultivated, and that there was no limit to the productive power of agriculture, given the application of science.¹⁸

18 F. Engels, 'Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy' (1844), in *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010) (hereafter MECW), vol. 111, pp. 418–43 at p. 439.

The *Communist Manifesto* contains a famous celebration of the productive forces unleashed by modern capitalism: 'Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground – what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?'¹⁹ Passages such as this lend support to an influential reading of Marx and Engels as committed to the advance of science and technology, and ever-growing human domination of nature as the basis for a future 'realm of abundance'. Much later, in *Capital*, Marx defined 'production' as a process in which nature itself is described as 'an instrument of labour', as 'one of the organs' of the worker's activity. It has been argued that this instrumental concept of nature overlooks the independent role of non-human nature and social relations as conditioning labour. Benton distinguished extractive and eco-regulatory labour as constrained by geography, climate, soil fertility, and so on, and as dependent on transformations occurring naturally, independently of human action.²⁰

Set against passages such as these, there are important aspects of the Marxian heritage as a whole that strongly favour an ecological interpretation. The materialist view of history which Marx suggested as a 'guiding thread' introduced concepts of distinct 'modes of production', dominant in different historical periods. This concept put the mode of combination of human labouring activity in relation to the rest of nature, and the distribution of the product of that labour, at the core of our understanding of the social divisions characteristic of any society. Marx's emphasis was on the development of those social divisions (class conflict), but the implications for the relationship between ecology and society are clear. Human dependence on interaction ('metabolism') with the rest of nature was present from Marx's earliest writings, and the concept of a mode of production shows the way to a study of the specific ecological dynamic associated with each dominant mode of organization. In modern times, this implies thinking of ecological problems not as the direct result of universals such as population, greed, or even hierarchy, but as consequences of a specific socio-economic formation: in our epoch, capitalism. Marx's analysis in *Capital* provides an explanatory framework for this. Capitalist production is a complex combination of labour as the application

19 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), in MECW, vol. v1, pp. 477–517.

20 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, in MECW, vol. xxxv, p. 189; T. Benton, 'Marxism and natural limits', *New Left Review* 187 (1989), pp. 51–86; Benton, 'Ecology, socialism and the mastery of nature'.

of specific skills, using tools and machines of many kinds, working upon many primary and secondary raw materials to produce something that meets a human need or want, together with an abstract process that reduces all this concrete, qualitative difference into a single abstract calculation – the deployment of human labour power to produce value in exchange that exceeds the initial outlay in value terms: the dominance of exchange-value over use-value, of profit over need, of capital over nature. More concretely, Engels had many years before produced his classic *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, exposing the degraded living environments of the working class in the industrial cities of Britain – a work that has inspired struggles for public health and environmental justice across the world.

Beyond Marx and Engels

The recovery of this important ecological dimension in the work of Marx and Engels has been spearheaded by scholars including John Bellamy Foster, Paul Burkett, and, more recently, Kohei Saito.²¹ They have shown that Marx took a strong interest in the problems of declining agricultural productivity and the loss of soil fertility late in his life. In a well-known passage in volume 1 of *Capital* Marx links the division between town and country as the cause of declining soil fertility, as nutrients in the form of waste products are not returned to the soil, while consumption of agricultural produce in the urban centres generates waste in the form of pollution and the degraded conditions of life in the urban centres. This understanding of capitalism as disrupting the circulation of nutrients has become generalized by this group of scholars into a notion of a ‘metabolic rift’ endemic in the relation between capitalism and the rest of nature.²²

Combined with modern scientific research on the severity of capitalism’s disruption of the carbon, phosphorus, water, and nitrogen cycles, biodiversity loss, and other ‘rifts’, and their encroachment on planetary boundaries, the political imperative is clear – transcendence of capitalism in favour of a form of socialism in which the associated workers rationally regulate their metabolism with nature.

- 21 P. Burkett, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); J. B. Foster, *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review, 2000); K. Saito, *Karl Marx’s Ecosocialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017).
- 22 J. B. Foster, B. Clark, and R. York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism’s War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010); I. Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016); F. Magdoff, J. B. Foster, and F. Buttel (eds.), *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food and the Environment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); Dickens, *Society and Nature*.

Alternative ways of using the Marxian heritage in the formation of green or eco-socialist approaches have tended to draw on it more critically, while still finding key ideas indispensable. One of the best developed of these alternatives is the theory of a 'second contradiction' of capitalism, developed by the late James O'Connor. The first contradiction is between forces and relations of production, yielding the class conflict that was most emphasized in Marx's thought. However (as suggested above), capitalist production depends on conditions external to itself, which its dominant forms of calculation tend to override – in potentially self-destructive ways. This is represented by O'Connor as an endemic contradiction between the forces and relations of capitalist production, on the one hand, and their conditions – both social and ecological – on the other. O'Connor draws on Polanyi's notion of 'fictitious commodities', arguing that both human labour and nature are treated as if they were commodities, though they are not reproduced in the way that commodities are. They do not obey the logic of the market, and the tendency is to degrade them or exploit them at a rate exceeding their capacity for reproduction. Like Polanyi (but unlike the 'metabolic rift' school), O'Connor has an account of the emergence of ecological, women's, and labour movements as forms of resistance produced by the 'second contradiction', and an account of the role of state intervention in ameliorating the contradiction: public health, minimum wages, environmental regulation, and so on.²³

While both O'Connor and like-minded eco-socialists draw from this sort of analysis a view of the practice of eco-socialism as involving coalitions of diverse social movements, the 'metabolic rift' school have offered relatively little in the way of strategic political thinking. For them, the situation demands an 'ecological revolution', and its agent will be an 'ecological proletariat', located primarily in the Global South, where the combination of economic hardship and ecological suffering is most concentrated.²⁴

Concluding Thoughts

By the end of the 2010s, evidence was accumulating of species extinctions at an unprecedented rate – in the view of many scientists, comparable to the rate of loss of the great geological extinction 'events', and leading to the

23 K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Times* (Boston: Beacon, 2001 [1944]); J. O'Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: Guilford, 1998).

24 J. B. Foster and B. Clark, *The Robbery of Nature: Capitalism and the Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), p. 287.

designation of the current period as the ‘anthropocene’. Vertebrates are the most thoroughly monitored group of organisms, and these have declined by some 60 per cent since 1970. The fate of the northern white rhino rightly gained much public recognition and sympathy, but more deeply threatening were the consequences of deforestation, loss of wetland habitats, loss of soil biodiversity, and huge declines in insect populations – all changes happening on a global scale.

At the same time, the extreme weather events forecast over many years by climate scientists were by now forcing retreat on the fossil fuel industries and their climate-change-denying allies in politics and the media. Unprecedented loss of ice in the Arctic and Antarctic, massive wild fires in California, Australia, the Amazon and, most alarming of all, in the Arctic, threatened lives and livelihoods and symbolized a wider process of destruction. What gained almost as much dramatic media imagery and public compassion as the threat to humans was the recognition that billions of non-human animals had been destroyed by the fires in Australia. Deforestation was linked to increased incidence of catastrophic flooding in many parts of the world, and hurricanes increased in frequency and intensity, as global temperatures rose steadily through the decade.

Then, through 2020 the world was faced with yet another threat unleashed by human invasion of natural ecosystems: the Covid-19 pandemic.

The new socialist understandings of human dependence on nature, and the associated analysis of the features of modern capitalism that are at work in generating this multidimensional crisis in its relation to nature, underline the urgency of a realignment between reds and greens. Both traditions have begun to think through what an alternative, post-capitalist, sustainable, and socially just way of living might be. The obstacles in the way of achieving that seem formidable but there remain, also, unresolved questions at the level of sensibility and value. Many among the socialists fully recognize the necessity of a transformed relation between humans and the rest of nature for the survival of humanity, let alone in order to achieve the vision of a fully realized human development and wellbeing.

The term ‘eco-socialism’ has come to characterize this broad current of thought on the left, but there remain differences among those who accept the label – often differences that are not fully articulated. In his early *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx complemented his account of human dependence on continuous metabolism with the rest of nature for the meeting of our bodily needs with the claim that we also have ‘spiritual needs’ for nature. The elements of nature – plants, animals, stones, light, air – as objects of art are

sources of 'spiritual nourishment'. But to provide this nourishment they must first be prepared 'to make [them] palatable and digestible'.²⁵ This dimension of Marx's thinking suggests that a fully human relation to nature must be something more than economic 'sustainability' or 'rational management'. That spiritual nourishment involves preparation suggests that this must be not merely an individual aesthetic encounter with nature, but rather something enabled by a transformed culture. This idea is developed in William Morris' great utopian novel *News from Nowhere*. Morris envisages a future in which the division of town and country has been overcome, and people live in harmony both with each other and with the rest of nature. Gardens, meadows, and orchards replace London's slums, and people have creative and enjoyable work. But Morris is explicit there is still a place for 'wild nature'. As his heroine Ellen declares: 'How I love the earth, and the weather and all that grows out of it.'²⁶

Marx's notion of 'spiritual' nourishment, and Morris' reference to 'love of the earth' point in the direction of the 'deeper' versions of green philosophy. Darwin's 'endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful' could be argued to have a value that stands independently of their necessity for human survival and wellbeing. Can a fully transformative politics continue to think of justice and wellbeing among humans as the core value, in abstraction from affective and normative concerns for the other beings with which we share the planet? Could, indeed, the movement for change be sufficiently rooted in the psychology of its participants and supporters without such a transvaluation of values?

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25 K. Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844', in *MECW*, vol. 111, pp. 229–346 at p. 275.

26 W. Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993 [1890]), p. 220.

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Crises and Futures of Social Democracy

GÖRAN THERBORN

The social democratic movement and the dream of socialism have a long history, arising out of and together with industrial capitalism, as a movement of resistance and as a vision of another, just and more equal society. The structural foundation of their current crisis is the decline of industrial capitalism in the richest part of the world and its stalling in the Global South. However, the mutation of capitalism into financial and digital forms does not do away with the tensions and conflicts between capital and labour.

The approach here differs from the mainstream current crisis literature, with a long-term historical timeframe of 1970–2020; with a global perspective, not limited to the European heartland; in highlighting the non-linearity of the process; and by looking into the future through the national political landscapes social democratic parties are operating in.

The Peak of the Labour Movement

Contrary to widespread opinion in the 1950s and early 1960s, affluent developed capitalism did not lead to lasting social integration and political quiescence. The late 1960s began a decade of manifold social and political contestation, now most often remembered as the US civil rights movement and as an international youth revolt. But it also included large confrontations between labour and capital, and led up to a historical peak of the west European labour movement. The 1970s–early 1980s saw the high tide of working-class power and influence in western Europe, the heartlands of social democracy. The rate of working-class trade union organization in the region culminated historically in the last years of the 1970s.¹ The power of

¹ D. Checchi and J. Visser, 'Pattern persistence in European trade union density', *European Sociological Review* 21, 1 (2005), pp. 1–21 at p. 2.

striking workers had never before or since been manifested as strongly as in 1968–74, with the French May 1968 general strike, the Italian ‘hot autumn’ of the 1969, and the British miners’ strike in 1974, which forced the Conservative government to put the question of who should rule the nation to the country, receiving the answer, Labour. There were also other, national landmark strikes, in usually more orderly countries, like the German 1969 (and 1978) ones, and the wildcat strike of the northern Swedish iron ore miners in 1979–80. The workers’ position at the workplace strengthened more than ever, unevenly, and in various national forms, but as an international trend. The wage share of total incomes increased significantly in the advanced capitalist countries in 1968–73, in contrast to a slight decline in the boom years of the 1960s,² and overall income inequality declined to a historical trough around 1980.³

Workplace advances were most visible in Sweden, where the 1970s saw a whole raft of pro-labour legislation enacted, driven by non-militant trade union pressure and effectuated by sympathetic governments. The raft included a stronger workplace position of union representatives, rules of job security regulating firing, a Co-determination Act (1976) making all major managerial changes subject to collective bargaining, a stiff Work Environment Act (1977) with strong shop stewards rights of intervention, and a Gender Equality Act (1979). There were many other examples in Europe at this time of advancing the rights of labour and curtailing the power of management. Rights of labour and the quality and dignity of work came high on the social and political agenda of the late 1960s–early 1980s. Changes were promoted from above by concerned social scientists and progressive politicians, the most noteworthy of these changes being the German government programme of ‘Humanization of Work Life’. In Britain, France, and Italy labour’s march forward followed more from workers’ militancy below, which governments and central trade union agreements tried to institutionalize.⁴

Electorally, the score of European labour in the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s was more uneven than the overall class picture of trade union organization and of standing in the workplace. Nevertheless, in several

2 P. Armstrong, A. Glyn, and J. Harrison, *Capitalism since World War II* (London: Fontana, 1984), p. 260.

3 OECD, *Growing Unequal* (Paris: OECD, 2008), ch. 1.

4 An international overview is given in G. Therborn, ‘The prospects of labour and the transformation of capitalism’, *New Left Review* 45 (1984), pp. 5–38; L. Kissler and U. Sattel, ‘Politics and the organization of work in France and the Federal Republic of Germany: a comparison’, *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 6, 1 (1985), pp. 35–64; M. Regini, ‘Labour unions, industrial action and politics’, *West European Politics* 2, 3 (1979), pp. 49–66.

countries it was historical springtide, namely in Austria (1979), France (1978–81), Germany (1972), Greece (1981), Italy (1976), the Netherlands (1977), and Sweden (1968). All the continental European social democracies and socialist parties reached their summits of voter support in the middle or at the end of the post-Second World War boom, between the mid-1960s and early 1980s. Prospering industrial capitalism led the labour movement to radicalize from the late 1960s.

For the first time in west European history, outside immediate post-war situations, an overcoming of capitalism was put on the agenda of the day by mainstream forces of labour. In 1976, the congress of the Swedish trade union confederation, the Landsorganisationen (LO), adopted a proposal of ‘wage-earner funds’, controlled by the unions, financed through annual levies on the profits of all major corporations, to be used for buying up shares of the corporations. Gradually, over a couple of decades the majority of the stock would be transferred to these funds. The plan was reaffirmed in somewhat modified form by the union congress of 1981, and, more cautiously ‘in principle’, by the Social Democratic Party (SAP) congress of 1981. The Swedish project was internationally known as the Meidner plan after its architect, the trade union economist Rudolf Meidner.⁵

In France, the 1972 Common Programme of the communist and socialist parties envisaged a gradual ‘transfer to the collectivity of the most important means of production and of the financial instruments currently in the hands of dominant capitalist groups’. The *110 Propositions for France* of the socialist presidential candidate in 1981, François Mitterrand, concretized the programme in a proposal for the nationalization, with extensive employee rights of control, of the banking system, the steel and arms industries, and nine industrial corporate groups.⁶

The record advances in the 1970s of the Austrian Socialist Party, gaining an absolute majority of votes in three subsequent elections under proportional representation, led to a programmatic specification of democratic socialism as a new socio-economic order, a ‘social democracy’ with new ‘relations of decision

5 A good overview from origin to end in English is J. Pontusson and S. Kuruvilla, ‘Swedish wage-earner funds: an experiment in economic democracy’, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 45, 4 (1992), pp. 779–91.

6 ‘Programme commun de gouvernement Parti socialiste–Parti communiste (27 juin 1972)’, *Supplément au ‘Bulletin Socialiste’ de juin 1972*, p. 8 (Part 2, Ch. 11); Parti Socialiste, *110 Propositions pour la France* (1981, reproduced by Institut Mitterrand, available at www.mitterrand.org/110-propositions-pour-la-france, proposition 21. For the context, see D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1996), ch. 19.



Fig. 29.1 Celebration of François Mitterrand's election as president of France, 1981.
(Photograph by Sergio Gaudenti/Sygma via Getty Images.)

and property', as a 'third phase' of the strivings of the labour movement, after political democracy and the welfare state.⁷

The First Fall

The above highlights the height of the fall of labour from 1980–82 onwards, in all three spheres of class organization, workplace and economy influence, and social democratic (and communist) electoral support cum governing prospects.

Trade unions have been seriously weakened everywhere, if unevenly. Industrial democracy and humanization of work have been replaced by 'human resource management'. Welfare state de-commodification through social citizenship has been succeeded by a commodification of states through 'new public management'. Keynesian economics has been overtaken by neo-liberalism, in economic policymaking as well as on the highest ground of academia. Between 1974 and 1992, the Nobel Committee of Swedish economists gave the Nobel Prize to five presidents of the small ultra-liberal Mont Pélerin Society.⁸ The Reagan–Thatcher couple set the international political tone, succeeding the voices of people like Willy Brandt, Bruno Kreisky, and Olof Palme.

Labour's fall was more a dive than a defeat, ducking the natural opposition of capital, its organizations and institutions. In fact, the only ones who fought for the cause of labour when the clouds darkened were the British miners in 1984–5, finally routed by the Thatcher Government. In both France and Sweden, the turn in 1982 and onwards was undertaken by social democrats in office, meeting no serious trade union opposition. Both projects of change began to be implemented in the early 1980s upon electoral victories in 1981 and 1982. But in Sweden it was capped by the SAP leadership, who were always hostile to the project, driven by mid-level union and party cadres and activists. A strict limit on corporate levies and public funding far short of any eventual corporate majority was inserted. The French socialist project, never embraced by all leaders of the Socialist Party, stalled in 1982 and stopped in 1983 under pressure from France's position in the German-dominated European Monetary System.⁹ The

7 SPÖ, *Das Parteiprogramm der SPÖ* (Vienna: SPÖ, 1978), available at www.rennerinstitut.at/uploads.

8 S. L. Mudge, *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 242.

9 S. July, *Les années Mitterrand. Histoire baroque d'une normalisation inachevée* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1986), pp. 94ff.

nationalizations very soon became absorbed into a 'modernization' programme in the national tradition of state capitalism.¹⁰

The first fall of social democracy took two different forms: electoral defeats, most importantly in the United Kingdom in 1979 and in Germany in 1983; and internal climbdowns, in France, Sweden, and Austria in the early 1980s, which did not spare them from soon being overtaken by an emboldened right. Neither defeat was a clear-cut victory of a neoliberal alternative. In Britain the main issue was industrial strife, the suicidal deployment of competing trade union power. The German *Wende* (turn) of 1982–3 was spearheaded by a new liberal militancy surging in the SPD's coalition partner, the FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei). The ensuing elections of social democratic loss also included the parliamentary entry of the greens on issues of rearmament and ecology.

In 1982, the Swedish SAP was elected on promises to defend the welfare state, while the leadership was convinced that restoration of a higher rate of business profits was the priority crisis policy. The SAP government started with a competitive devaluation and continued with wholesale financial deregulation, leading to a financial crisis and electoral defeat.¹¹ The Austrian party weakened gradually in the 1980s amid corruption scandals, under an increasingly 'Third Way' post-Kreisky management of a deepening economic crisis until a heavy electoral blow in 1994.¹²

From Industrial to Post-Industrial Capitalism

The social democratic fall was from the peak of industrial capitalism, of industrial employment and industrial society, which, as Marx had foreseen, had led to a high ground of workers' organization, influence, power, and demands, and in at least two or three countries to the threshold of socialism, but not over it. In the decade from 1965 to 1975 industrial employment – in manufacturing, mining, and construction – culminated in continental western Europe, in Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Pioneering Britain

10 M. Maclean, 'Privatization in France 1993–1994: new departures or a case of *plus ça change?*', *West European Politics* 18, 2 (1995), pp. 273–90.

11 G. Therborn, 'Sweden's turn to inequality, 1982–2019', *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 52 (2020), pp. 159–66.

12 M. Micus, 'Die Macht der Autosuggestion. Reale Krise und gefühlte Stärke bei der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie', in F. Butzlaff, M. Micus, and F. Walter (eds.), *Genossen in der Krise. Europas Sozialdemokratie auf dem Prüfstand* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), pp. 31–8.

was different, with the largest industrial share of employment materializing in 1911. Belgium also differed, peaking in 1947, with Greece, Portugal, and most of eastern Europe about 1980.¹³

Industrial societies developed in many political and cultural forms, and with them the working class. However, the contours of a common international industrial working-class milieu are discernible. It had a collective cohesiveness from a large number of people working, and usually living, together, clearly demarcated from a defining social 'Other', the owner and his managers. These workers were always economically differentiated by skill and payment, but the former differentiation tended to be weakened by increasing managerial control, and the latter by growing trade union influence.

De-industrialization meant a gradual shrinking, impoverishment, erosion, and dissolution of this working-class milieu. The big factories shrank or closed, and the new workplaces of the service economy were smaller, more spread out, and increasingly worked by temporary labour. The working-class towns, neighbourhoods, and housing estates were succeeded by a variety of living spaces. It meant the destruction of the once densely organized working-class communities sustaining the labour movements, perhaps most importantly the French communist and the Austrian socialist movements.

Industrial capitalism was reorganized on a global scale, de-industrialization in high-wage, more or less unionized countries, outsourcing to low-wage, no/few labour rights countries – or previously peripheral national areas – and the organization of global supply chains, made possible by new digital technology. While outsourced capitalist industry has generated workplace resistance, trade unions, and increasing wages, its already declining employment share means that European-type industrial societies will never be re-created.¹⁴

Domestic labour markets and work conditions in the rich countries of de-industrializing capitalism were also reorganized. Managerial prerogatives and demands were re-enthroned in labour markets and workplaces, 'flexibility', 'employability', and 'human resource management' replaced 'security', 'safety', 'democracy', and 'humanization of work'. Trade unionism plummeted.

What followed the erosion of industrial capitalism was not the post-capitalist post-industrial society of science and culture envisaged by Daniel

13 G. Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 69; see also H. Kitschelt, *The European Transformation of European Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 42f.

14 ILO, *Employment in Industry*, 2019, available at www.ilo.org.

Bell¹⁵ and others, but a new capitalist dynamic, driven by finance and a new technological revolution, originally generated in the US military-industrial complex. This new digitalized, remote-controlled financial capitalism implies a fundamental structural weakening of the position of wage-labour, largely by deliberate design.

Finance and digital control are the intertwined main drivers of post-industrial capitalism. Finance thrives in its own circuits, largely decoupled from 'the real economy'. Digitalization means remote control and surveillance. The abundance of capital in the rich world has led to formidable alliances of finance capital and digital entrepreneurs, which make possible the conquest of world markets through relentless expansion by multi-year endurance of losses. Post-industrial financial and digital capitalism still reproduces the intrinsic tensions and conflicts between labour and capital, and the political system is de-structured by, rather than incorporated into, 'surveillance capitalism', as new channels of political mobilization have opened up.

Ethnicity and Cultural Divisions

Historically, there have been two major cultural dividers of the working class, ethnicity and religion. The latter led to the creation of Catholic and Protestant Christian labour movements in multi-confessional countries. With European secularization, the latter divide began to disappear in the 1960s and has now been overcome. The ethnic-racial divide has always been the most pernicious, particularly in settler-cum-immigration countries like Australia, South Africa, and the United States.

Ethnic conflict was historically less prominent in western Europe, little ethnically differentiated and a sub-continent of out-migration. However, since the 1960s western Europe has become an area of immigration. Its industrial boom needed more industrial workers than its indigenous populations were willing to provide. The immigrant population grew, with migrants from Latin American dictatorships, from poverty in ex-communist Europe and in Africa, and from the Afghanistan to Libya range of US- and Euro-supported war zones. Ethnic conflict and xenophobia have become a major political issue in western Europe, and in particular a major working-class divide.¹⁶

The '1968' movement left an enduring legacy of a changed political culture, breaking out of traditional male hierarchies and their modernized

15 D. Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1999 [1973]).

16 J. Rydgren (ed.), *Class Politics and the Radical Right* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

but age-old norms of decorum and acceptable behaviour.¹⁷ Feminism and women's liberation were the cavalry of this transformation. One little-noticed aspect of the feminist emancipation from patriarchy was its starting a new gendering of left-right politics. Up until the 1960s, majorities of women voted for right-wing parties. Then they began changing into today's most frequent pattern of women preferring social democracy or other left. The student revolt was the most spectacular feature of '1968'. Beneath the spectacle, a major cultural change of expanding higher education was emerging, with a leftish or centre-left enculturation. Thomas Piketty is perhaps the first scholar who has drawn attention to the development of centre-left parties, including social democratic ones, to become parties of the highly educated, more so than of workers in several cases.¹⁸

There was no necessary enmity between the new radical culture and the classical working class. Historically, there were encounters of mutual attraction, of socialist feminism, of intellectual working-class alignment and political leadership. What was new was a changed relation of force, between a shrinking, fragmented, to a significant extent socially losing and excluded working class and, on the other hand, a vastly enlarged educated salariat, liberated by '1968' and with, until the crash of 2008, apparently good economic prospects. The movement included an affluent 'post-materialist' current substituting issues of natural environment and interpersonal culture for industrial society concerns of development, economic power, and socio-economic equality. All this amounted to major challenges for the labour movement. The cultural earthquake of '1968' also contributed to opening up a political space for unconventional political entrepreneurs on the far right who became successful in tapping the resentment among parts of the working class.

The Context

Fundamental changes of social structuration usually take place under contingent circumstances, shaping their timing and pace. Three contingent upheavals of the world economy were paramount in this case. First, the competitive return to the world market of the losers of the Second World War, Germany and Japan, and the entry of the uniquely industrialized former colonies of the latter, South Korea and Taiwan, threatening basic industries

17 G. Ely, *Forging Democracy: A History of the Left in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pt iv.

18 T. Piketty, *Capital et idéologie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2019), chs. 14–15.

of the United States and western Europe, steel, auto, shipbuilding, etc. Secondly, the oil price hike shocks coming from the post-colonial Middle East, spiking industrial energy costs, generating the post-Keynesian phenomenon of simultaneous rises in unemployment and inflation, and opening the doors to neoliberal economics. Thirdly, the break-up of the post-Second World War international monetary system, opening the sluices for international financial speculation, fuelled by the windfall of petro-dollars and facilitated in the 1980s by financial deregulation and the lifting of capital controls.¹⁹

The impacting context also included the stepping up of the European integration project: 'the last great world-historical achievement of the bourgeoisie' of the liberal (and Christian democratic) elites of western Europe, with its implications of economic liberalization and constraints on national fiscal and monetary policy. European liberalization constrained social democratic policies, and alienated party elites from ordinary citizens.²⁰ All parts of this context directly weakened the forces of labour, and the restructuring of capitalism into financial and digital forms made changed capital-labour relations enduring.

The Comeback, and the Second Fall

However, electoral politics has its own dynamics, moulded by, but irreducible to, social class relations. The increasingly aggressive neoliberalism pursued by the right-wing beneficiaries of the first social democratic fall then created a social backlash, generating a social democratic comeback in the second half of the 1990s, when social democrats were governing or co-governing most of Europe, the East included.

The social democratic comeback marched forward along two different lines, which were sometimes blurred. One was a re-affirmed social democracy of social justice and equality, a shred of socialism and radical reform proposals, and with an added claim of economic competence. That was the line of the Swedish SAP in 1994, successfully repeated in 1998 and 2002, while stealthily producing the largest economic inequality increase in western Europe.²¹ The French social democratically led 'plural left' won electorally

19 B. Harrison and B. Bluestone, *The Great U-Turn* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); R. Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (London: Verso, 2006).

20 P. Anderson, 'Depicting Europe', *London Review of Books*, 20 September 2007.

21 G. Therborn, *Inequality and the Labyrinths of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2020).

two years after a successful working-class mobilization against a conservative government proposal of cutting pension rights.

The other, British, line was a boisterous break with the past, contrasting 'New Labour' with 'Old Labour', explicitly accepting previous neoliberal economic, especially fiscal, policy, and adding something, for example, 'education, education, education'. The SPD chancellor candidate Gerhard Schröder aligned himself with Tony Blair, issuing a joint declaration with him. But, in fact, the German electoral victory in 1998 seems to have been more due to high unemployment and Christian democratic proposals of pension and social insurance cuts.²²

The theoretician of New Labour was the distinguished sociologist Anthony Giddens, who wrote the manifesto for a new international social democratic current, 'the Third Way'. Giddens brought his academic sophistication and erudition to the book, but his contempt of and animosity against First Way 'old-style social democracy' is palpably the key message. 'The welfare state . . . today creates almost as many problems as it resolves' (p. 16). 'It [the welfare state] is essentially undemocratic' (p. 112). Social democrats 'should move away from . . . an obsession with inequality' (p. 100).²³

The joint Blair–Schröder declaration is less rude, but in the same vein: critical of 'equality of outcome' and of 'neglect of the importance of rewarding effort', distancing itself from 'ever higher levels of public spending' and 'disproportionate expansion of the government's reach', from 'rights . . . elevated above responsibilities', and from 'exaggerating the ability of national governments . . . to secure jobs'.²⁴ Blair and Schröder, and also their Swedish contemporary Göran Persson, were extraordinarily skilled politicians, formidable campaigners, as well as tough government managers. The temporary social democratic comeback was arguably more an achievement of leadership and an effect of electoral disappointment with neoliberalism than of a veering of ideology and policy.

In a world of accelerating inequality, the line of abandoning the non-affluent, the core supporters of classical First Way social democracy, plunged social democracy into its second fall. Being abandoned by the neoliberalized social democrats, they abandoned social democracy, at first mainly by

22 P. Pulzer, 'The German federal election of 1998', *West European Politics* 22, 3 (1999), pp. 241–9.

23 A. Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), pp. 16, 112, 100.

24 T. Blair and G. Schröder, *Europe: The Third Way/Die Neue Mitte*, 1998, available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files-bueros/suedafrika/02828.pdf>.

abstaining from voting, but soon by providing support to right-wing political entrepreneurs who spotted their potential and gave them respect, while rousing xenophobia, chauvinism, and cultural reaction. The non-social democratic left did try to reach the abandoned too, but with much less success.

The Third Way ended ignominiously, with Blair's support of the US invasion of Iraq, which finally made him the most reviled politician in the United Kingdom, and with Schröder's liberal *Agenda 2010*, received as a generator of a labour market precariat, which caused an organized working-class exodus precipitating the SPD from 41 per cent of the vote in 1998, to 34 per cent in 2005, and to 23 per cent in 2009. Indeed, all the bounce-backs, including the Swedish, with or without a 'Third Way', soon ended in disastrous defeats. The British, coming after Thatcher's harsh anti-labour policies, had the longest life, from 1997 to 2010.

In Italy, a kind of Third Way politics developed in *opera buffa* form. Its big, social democratized Communist Party (PCI) dissolved itself in 1989–91, at a level of electoral support above its 1946–68 average. In 1994, the Socialist Party dissolved itself, its last leader fleeing abroad to avoid corruption charges, leaving the party mutating into splinter grouplets. The ex-communists, by contrast, have stayed busy re-inventing themselves and searching for new electoral partners. The PCI became the Democratic Party of the Left, which became the Democrats of the Left, which became the Democratic Party (PD). 'Social democratic' was too radical for some of the partners. But the PD is a member of the social democratic grouping in the European Parliament, which to accommodate the Italians changed to call itself a party of socialists and democrats. In 1996, these manoeuvres seemed to yield results, in the forming of a successful electoral coalition under an ex-Christian democratic academic, the Olive Tree, sustaining a series of shaky moderate cabinets until 2001, and in 2006–8. Decline followed, and in 2018, the Democratic Party got 18.9 per cent of the vote, and its coalition 22.9 per cent, down from the Olive coalition's 42.2 per cent in 1996. The PD loss went to new 'populist' movements. Before the financial crash of 2008, the Third Way was almost everywhere leading to European social democracy's deepest crisis ever.²⁵

25 The political consequences of the Third Way are treated by C. Arndt, *The Electoral Consequences of Third Way Welfare State Reforms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); O. Cramme and P. Diamond (eds.), *After the Third Way: The Future of Social Democracy in Europe* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012); J. Karreth, J. Polk, and Ch. Allen, 'Catch all or catch and release? The electoral consequences of social democratic parties' march to the middle in western Europe', *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 7 (2013), pp. 791–822; R. Manwaring and J. Holloway, 'A new wave of social democracy? Policy

The Eastern Extension

The implosion of eastern European communism opened up a new space not only for capital, the EU, and NATO, but also for social democracy. For a short while the direction of economic change was an open question. The anti-communist movements had been careful not to raise the banner of capitalism, or to put the economic system to a vote. A big survey of late 1993 found large non-capitalist majorities in east-central Europe,²⁶ but key leaders had their economic ambition, the restoration of capitalism, 'market economy'.

The social democratic political brand has sold remarkably well in post-communist eastern Europe.²⁷ All of it (west of Belarus), except Serbia, has at least one social democratic party of some sort and significance. Nearly all of them have for shorter or longer periods led a government, the parties of Estonia and Montenegro have been minor coalition partners. Only in Latvia has social democracy been unable to gain any entrance to the national government, although it is governing the capital city, Riga.

There were two social democratic efforts. The attempts of a progressive minority of the anti-communist intelligentsia to set up a new social democratic party were almost complete failures. The Estonian party is the only exception of the 1989–91 cohort. Three other parties arose within the post-communist political system: Smer (Direction) in Slovakia, Latvian Harmony, and the Democratic Party of Moldova. Everywhere else new social democratic parties stayed marginal, often outside parliament. They could never root themselves in the domestic population, and among the anti-communist intelligentsia they remained a fringe.

Successful, for a while, were a number of self-transformations of former ruling communist parties into social democratic ones. The Socialist International decided to recognize these converted parties, which had the advantage of nationwide roots among the popular classes. From Lithuania to Romania, recent convert social democrats swept into government office in the 1990s–early 2000s, in Poland voting the anti-communist hero Lech Wałęsa out of the presidency in 1995. In Czechoslovakia, the picture was a bit more complicated. Both in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia new social

change across the social democratic family, 1970s–2010s', *Government and Opposition*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 20 January 2021.

26 W. L. Miller, S. White, and P. Heywood, *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), tables 6.1–6.4.

27 This east European overview is primarily based on English-language Wikipedia records, checked against each other, on national elections, 1990–2020, and on party and party leader entries.

democratic parties were put up, in the Czech Republic under a returned emigrant leader. Both failed to get into parliament. The Slovak communists re-labelled themselves, but did not do much more, while the Czech communists chose to remain communists. In both countries, there were a number of reform communists from the Prague Spring, out of whom new dynamic leaders emerged, driving social democracy into power in both countries: Miloš Zeman took over the fledgling émigré party in the Czech Republic; and Robert Fico created a new party in Slovakia.

East European social democratic parties operate in three geopolitical groups of countries, providing a handy framework for summing up their current situations (based on parliamentary elections results, up to February 2021) and prospects.

Baltic countries: In Estonia, the new social democratic party stood at 9.8 per cent in 2019, an occasional minor coalition partner in an electoral system of proportional representation. In Latvia, the social democratic party 'Harmony' is also a new formation, and a relatively rather substantial one, with 19.8 per cent of the vote in 2018, peaking at 28 per cent in 2011, in slow decline since. It is ethnically ostracized, because it is largely a party of Russian-speakers, and 'Harmony' presumably refers to ethnicity rather than to class. In Lithuania, social democracy is rooted in reform communism; its first leader and the first elected president of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, had been head of the Communist Party. Lithuanian social democracy has been falling in popularity ever since 2000, when a 'Social Democratic Coalition of Algirdas Brazauskas' reached 52.9 per cent of the vote. In 2020 it only received 9.25 per cent.

Balkan countries: Here ex-communist mutated parties have established themselves as enduring major parties, either in government or as the main opposition. Most successful is the Albanian Socialist Party, in government since 2013, re-confirmed in 2017 with a vote of 48.3 per cent. Its leader and prime minister, Edi Rama, was previously mayor of Tirana, and in that capacity in 2004 voted that year's best mayor in the world. The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) is multi-ethnic but strongest among the Bosniaks, 14 per cent in the federation in 2018, an advance. While not internationally recognized as social democrats, it may be noted that the leading Serb nationalist party in B-H calls itself the Union of Independent Social Democrats. The Bulgarian Socialist Party had its main electoral success in the first half of the 1990s, reaching 47 per cent in 1990, but from 1997 its support, together with its electoral alliances, has swung between 15 (2014) and 31 per cent (in 2005), stopping at 27.2 per cent in 2017. In a multi-party system this is sufficient for alternatively leading a government coalition or the

opposition. The Croatian party with its electoral partners is currently in opposition, with 24.9 per cent, a fall of 9 percentage points since the previous election, but not yet part of any secular trend. The Slovenian social democrats were once, in 2008, supported by a good 30 per cent of the electorate, but mostly their support has hovered between 10 and 17 per cent, with a nadir of 5.9 per cent in 2004. In the 2018 election, they stood at 9.9 per cent, both the 2004 and the 2018 results qualifying them for government participation. The Democratic Party of Moldova had its best election in 2019 with 23.6 per cent of the vote, and formed the government, which soon collapsed, however, and its businessman leader fled the country, hunted for huge-scale corruption. The two social democratic parties of Montenegro together gained 7 per cent in 2020. The Social Democratic Union of North Macedonia and its electoral alliances have so far always scored well above 20 per cent, and it is currently in government with 35.9 per cent of the vote. Romanian social democracy comes out of the reform communist National Salvation Front and remains one of the two poles of the party system of the country, despite its huge loss in 2020, falling from 48.5 per cent in 2016 to 28.9 per cent.

Central European Visegrad countries: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, were the centre of the eastern European anti-communist movement in the 1980s, which brought down the existing regimes. By the late 1990s, they were all governed by converted ex-communist parties, in Poland from 1993. This second chance was not used very well from a social democratic perspective. The converts were all anxious to prove their conversion, and social and economic policies then prevailing in the Western powers of the United States and the EU and their international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF were dutifully followed. The convert parties pursued more right-wing liberal socio-economic policies than their competitors.²⁸ They also functioned as US spearheads in Europe, the 'New Europe' (US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld), advocating NATO expansion and supporting the invasion of Iraq. In Slovakia, social democrats came to power only in 2006, after the national issues around Slovak independence had left the political centre stage. They used a more radical rhetoric than their sister parties, without much qualitative difference in policy.²⁹ The heyday of Visegrad social

28 M. Tavits and N. Letki, 'When left is right: party ideology and policy in post-communist Europe', *American Political Science Review* 104, 4 (2009), pp. 555–69; M. Snegovaya, 'How ex-communist left parties reformed and lost', *West European Politics*, available online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2020.1869447>, last accessed 1 February 2021.

29 D. Malová, 'Strengthening Social Democracy in the Visegrad Countries', 2017, available at <https://euagenda.eu/upload/publications/untitled-145675-ea.pdf>.

democracy is now over, very unlikely to return,³⁰ although its parties are still big enough to have potential for coalitions in a proportional party system. The Czech party is down to 6–7 per cent (legislative election 2017, regional elections 2020). The Hungarian party scored 11.9 per cent in 2018, the Polish Democratic Left Alliance 12.5 per cent, a slight recovery since 2015, and Slovak social democracy 18.3 per cent, down from 28 per cent in 2016 and 44 per cent in 2012, and now splitting.³¹

The social costs and unpopularity of social democratic neoliberalism have led to a political castling, whereby social issues have increasingly been taken up by right-wing parties, most successfully in Hungary and Poland.

Social democracy has returned to eastern Europe mainly thanks to converted communists. Its principal contribution to eastern European societies and politics has been their adaptation to the EU and their NATOification. Compared with this legacy, social democracy's socio-economic impact has been minor. This imbalance between foreign and popular domestic concerns has cost the social democrats dearly. Almost all parties have also been involved in corruption scandals at the highest level. The electoral system offers possibilities of coalitional minister posts to most social democratic parties. But it is only in the Balkans that some of them appear to have a foreseeable future of possibly substantial influence. The best chances at the time of writing are in Albania and North Macedonia, both countries being among the smallest and the poorest of Europe.

Global Attraction

The Socialist International (SI) was reconstituted in 1951, as an overwhelmingly west European organization, with a set of east European exile parties affiliated. From outside Europe there were the Jamaican National People's Party and the Japanese Socialists, plus European offshoots in Britain's white dominions and Israel. It started out as an explicitly Cold War organization.³² Under the presidency of Willy Brandt, 1976–92, the SI adopted a much wider, global perspective, with much focus on peace, disarmament, and Cold War détente, North–South relations, including support for national liberation

30 R. Anderson, 'Social Democracy: What Is Left in Central Europe?', 2020, available at <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/26/social-democracy>.

31 See 'Slovakia political briefing: Voice-SD – a beginning of new era of social democracy in Slovakia?', China-CEE Institute (china-cee.eu), last accessed 20 July 2020.

32 An unofficial history is A. Silver, 'The New Face of the Socialist International', 1981, available at <https://www.heritage.org/report/the-new-face-the-socialist-international-o>. See also Talbot Imlay, Chapter 15, this volume.

from racism and colonialism in southern Africa, and on human rights, including a new concern with Latin America and its military dictatorships.

The SI's international profile has dimmed since the time of Brandt, but it has been followed by a remarkable expansion of membership. By January 2021, the SI had full membership parties in eighty-one countries of the world, most of them outside Europe, in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. More than half of them, forty-seven, have joined since 1995, thirty-six of which in the twenty-first century.³³

This expansion is all the more remarkable as the International split in 2013. Upon the initiative of the German SPD, a group of the old core, namely British Labour and the Scandinavian and Dutch parties, seceded, setting up a Progressive Alliance (PA), in which many SI parties also participate without leaving the International. The reason for secession given by the then SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel was that the SI had opened its doors to non-democratic and corrupt parties. True, but the SI had just expelled three parties for this reason, including the regime parties of Egypt and Tunisia toppled by the Arab Spring. The PA defines itself as an 'association of progressive, social democratic, socialist and labour parties, political organizations and networks', wanting 'to make the 21st century a century of democratic, social, and ecological progress'.³⁴

The expansion of the SI, with its statutory self-definition 'of . . . political parties which seek to establish democratic socialism' expresses a kind of global attraction in the new century, which has to be taken into account when looking at the prospects of social democracy. Many of these parties are tiny, with only a small chance in the foreseeable future of having much impact on their countries, in Equatorial Guinea or the 'Democratic' Republic of Congo, for instance. Of some, one may say that they have had their chances, but blew most of them, like the South African ANC, the Indian Congress, the Pakistan People's Party, the Argentine Radicals, or the Mexican PRI.

Nevertheless, it is not without significance that the SI could claim, on the threshold to 2021, that its member parties were taking part in the government of twenty-eight countries. The 'social democratic family' gatherings, from big conferences to small seminars and workshops, which the SI, the Progressive Alliance, and the resourceful (state-financed) Friedrich Ebert Foundation,

33 Calculated from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_International. The home page of the SI is available at www.socialistinternational.org, which is the main source here for its membership, regional organizations, and its activities, but it does not list years of membership.

34 See www.progressive-alliance.info.

aligned with the SPD, are offering, can provide ideas, inspiration, and support for a different kind of politics from that of international capital and national conservatism. The membership applications indicate a search for, a hope of, another society than that of the prevailing world order.

Different Political Landscapes and Different Social Democratic Futures

A deep crisis of European – East and West – social democracy is undeniable. Of eighteen functioning Western social democratic parties (including the Italian), ten scored their post-Second World War low in the latest elections, and all, except New Zealand Labour and the Canadian NDP, in this century. The crisis has been shaped by structural changes of industrial capitalism, by post-industrial cultural changes, and by political decisions. However, the history of international social democracy is not one of linear evolution, neither upwards nor downwards. The foreseeable future of each national social democratic party will be framed by the political landscapes of party and election systems in which it is situated. Even such a cautious peek into the future cannot avoid the risks of the unexpected, though. Party choices of policy, strategy, and leadership cannot be predicted, while they might change the political landscape.

With that caveat we may distinguish the following landscapes facing the eighteen core Western social democratic parties, with their very different challenges to political activists and leaders.³⁵

The easiest terrain lies in front of the *Anglo Labour parties*, of Australia, Britain, and New Zealand, inhabiting one part of a (largely) two-party landscape, fortified by the first-past-the-post Westminster system of elections (albeit qualified in Australia and now repealed in New Zealand). British Labour is an illuminating example, after catastrophic defeats to Thatcher in 1979 and in the 1980s, it came back with electoral – if not social – vengeance in 1997. After the demoralizing defeats of 2010 and 2015 came the near-win upturn in 2017, and a year after the disaster of 2019, Labour was winning back working-class sympathies in the opinion polls.³⁶ In October 2020, New Zealand Labour

35 For a different landscaping, based on quantitative electoral history and less concerned with social and political parameters, such as electoral and party systems, see P. Delwit, ‘“This Is the Final Fall”: An Electoral History of European Social Democracy (1870–2019)’, Working Paper Centre d’étude de la vie politique (CEVIPOL), Brussels, 2021.

36 M. Savage, ‘Keir Starmer winning Tory Leave voters for Labour – poll’, *Guardian*, 12 December 2020.

won a historical record of votes, due to Prime Minister Ahern's handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Once a party has gained a seat at a two-party table, under Westminster rules, it is likely to win the power prize sooner or later, for some time. It can lose its seat there, as the British Liberals did, but that required the rise of a new, cohesive, and self-conscious class, the working class. The Anglo Labour parties have already taken a big middle-class insurance against any repetition.

The Canadian NDP, despite its authentic social democratic formation, is in a weaker position, as it grew out of regional parties, in Saskatchewan and later British Columbia, and so far has not managed to claim a place at the national two-party table.

Another good bet on the future of social democracy is the *Iberian*, currently governing. Their main right-wing opponents are of about the same size, currently smaller, in a system of proportional representation. They can claim to be the party of the nation's democratic transition and they have recently both, the Portuguese and the Spanish, overcome the liberal taboo against co-operating with the radical left, thereby gaining some autonomy from the centre-right.

The once powerful *Nordic* social democratic welfare state-builders have lost their parliamentary dominance, most likely for ever. They are now cut down to between 20 and 30 per cent of the vote, the Finnish even below that. But they are playing against a set of competing centre-right parties, and even weakened they can sometimes catch a pivotal political position, which underlies the current social democratically led governmental coalitions and alliances of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. More than their sister parties, they, and in particular the Swedish, have also kept their working-class and popular roots. Even seriously diminished, the SAP is still clearly more a workers' party, and more a party of the low-educated, than one of the highly educated.³⁷

The *mid-European coalition parties*, the Belgian, Dutch, and Swiss social democratic parties, are located in polycentric political systems of proportional representation, and are normal parts of national governmentality in their countries. Once a heroic fighter for universal suffrage, the Belgian party is now split between a Walloon and a Flemish party. The Dutch party had some ambition for social change in the 1970s, but then bet on the neoliberal right. It paid dearly, with just 5.7 per cent of the vote both in 2017 and in 2021, and is now part of social democracy's casualties. But the European elections

37 Statistics Sweden, *Partisynpatiuundersökningen 2020*, available at www.scb.se. On average, in 2018–20, 37 per cent of workers supported the SAP, and 26 per cent of the highly educated.

of 2019, with a 19 per cent score, showed that it is not beyond redemption in a political ambience of volatility. The Swiss party has become an upper-middle-class party, although in 1992 middle-class radicals put *Überwindung des Kapitalismus* (Overtaking Capitalism) into its programme.³⁸ These parties had their part in national and local welfare state history without a chance to mould it. They will probably keep their modest role.

Two *grand historical social democratic parties* are in great trouble, the Austrian and the German, once the benchmarks and beacons of social democracy. Both are facing unified bourgeois blocs of (mainly Catholic) Christian democracy. Neither is protected by a Westminster electoral system. Therefore, both could rather easily be relegated to third-party status. The Austrian fall is the most spectacular, from 51.0 per cent of the vote in 1979 to 21.2 per cent in 2019, with the erosion of the industrial working-class *Lager*. The German party vote has fallen from 45.8 per cent in 1972 to 20.5 per cent in 2017, below its support of 1893, most directly pushed by Gerhard Schröder's Agenda 2010, of solving Germany's unemployment by creating a low-wage precariat. The cultural divides of ethnicity and '1968' have so far affected the secular camp much more than German Christian democracy, although the latter's broad post-war coalitions have also become vulnerable to political erosion. In the 2021 German election, this happened to the CDU and gave the SPD a chance to govern, together with the Greens and the Liberals, despite a lower vote than in 1898. The historical core of European social democracy is unlikely to play any leading domestic political role in the near future.

Finally, we have *the casualties*, the parties lethally wounded, in France, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands, mentioned above. In all four countries, most of all in Italy, the whole party system has become unhinged and volatile. In Italy, the PCI and the PSI both dissolved in the early 1990s, and in the succeeding manoeuvres by competing elite factions the socialists have virtually disappeared, while in the prolonged dilution of the ex-communists, little of any labour movement or social democratic tradition seems to have survived. The Partito Democratico, whatever it is or will mutate into, remains, though, a significant player in the coalition games of a very unstable and fractured party system.

In France, the socialist party which carried Mitterrand to power was formed only in 1971, by various groups merging after the ignominious fall of the classical social democratic party with its colonialist history and its venerable out-of-date name, the French Section of the Workers International (SFIO).

38 F. Walter, 'Cupli-Genossen. Sozialdemokratie in der Schweiz', in Butzlaff, Micus, and Walter (eds.), *Genossen in der Krise*, pp. 50–65 at p. 60.



Fig. 29.2 Downhearted supporters of socialist Lionel Jospin reacting to his press conference at his headquarters in Paris after his loss in the first round of the presidential election, 21 April 2002. Jospin finished behind both the conservative Jacques Chirac and the far-right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen, prompting him to announce his retirement from politics. (Photograph by Daniel Simon/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images.)

Already before the party plummeted to 6–7 per cent of the vote in the elections of 2017, the man who led the socialist party to presidential victory in 2012 regarded it as dead and in need of ‘hara-kiri’.³⁹ In 2022, the PS presidential candidate received just 1.8 per cent of the vote, while the left candidate of La France Insoumise got 22 per cent. It is likely that a new centre-left middle-class party of the highly educated will be put up, with a potential for significance. In Greece, PASOK is trying to regroup, with some other centre-left currents, into a Movement for Change, with less promising prospects. PASOK has now clearly been overtaken by a New Left party, SYRIZA.

The Future of Social Democracy and of Socialism

As an industrial working-class movement, social democracy is in terminal decline, along with industrial societies. New societies structured and cultured by industrial capitalism – and by classical resistance to it – will not develop. Capitalism has a new dynamic, financial and digital, ruling a world where

39 G. Davet and F. Lhomme, *Un Président ne devrait pas dire ça . . .* (Paris: Stock, 2016), p. 622.

only 57 per cent of the labour force are in the employer–employee wage labour nexus, and most of the rest in subsistence economies, without major industrial outlets.⁴⁰

Outgoing industrial societies left three assets, which have varying, but nowhere fully, compensated for the destruction of the industrial class milieu in providing support for the left: women's liberation from patriarchy; the cultural transformation of mass higher education; and welfare state employment.⁴¹ But they also left a debt of unresolved ethnic division.

As a political movement for less inequality, for some sense of collective social responsibility and solidarity, and for universal human rights, social democracy is not going to disappear in the foreseeable future. New come-backs of rising support remain possible, and for the Anglo Labour parties even likely. It may function increasingly as a vehicle of progressive middle-class politics, of the educated salariat, in the public service sector particularly, rather than as a labour movement. This might involve an increasing abandonment of the most disadvantaged population, and thereby generating a 'populist' backlash,⁴² but not necessarily.

The extra-European radiation of social democracy has increased substantially in recent years, at least on a political elite level, but there are no signs yet of any important political breakthroughs anywhere. Several of the early Latin American signature parties have crashed, Acción Democrática (AD) of Venezuela, the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN) of Costa Rica, and the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) of the Dominican Republic. The socialists of Chile and the Workers' Party of Brazil are in serious (though not lethal) crisis. Latin American social democracy was discredited by the virulent neoliberal turn of its Costa Rican, Peruvian, and Venezuelan parties, and is weakened by its hostility to what it calls 'populism', leading to conservative alignments from Mexico to Argentina.

In Asia, the SI's only heavyweight members, the Indian Congress Party and the Pakistan People's Party, have rather dubious social democratic credentials, although both have included kindred currents, as do some other non-negligible players, like the Nepali Congress, the Kurdish PUK of Iraq, the governing ex-communist People's Party of Mongolia, and the Frente

40 ILO, *Status in Employment*, 2019, available at www.ilo.org.

41 Public employment has been found to be a strong predictor of contemporary social democratic voting in Europe, see G. Benedetto, S. Hix, and N. Mastroiocco, 'The rise and fall of social democracy, 1918–2017', *American Political Science Review* 114, 3 (2020), pp. 928–39 at p. 938.

42 S. Berman and M. Snegovaya, 'Populism and the decline of social democracy', *Journal of Democracy* 30, 3 (2019), pp. 1–19.

Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN) of East Timor. Outside high politics there is a recent lively social democratic network in South-East Asia, 'Socdem Asia', linking new parties and movements of the region.⁴³ The Japanese Socialist/Social Democratic Party, an old member of the SI, has imploded and almost disappeared, with only 1.69 per cent of the vote in 2017. Even in the most recent area of expansion, Africa, one of the oldest and most successful African social democratic parties, the Socialist Party of Senegal, is in a process of disintegration.⁴⁴

Since 1990, a large number of affiliations have come in Africa, of small country parties in West Africa and the Sahel, including reigning ones, and, more significantly, of the governing national liberation movements of southern Africa, the African National Congress (ANC), Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), and South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). The strong Scandinavian support of their struggle had laid a common ground, especially with the ideologically diverse ANC, but there was also, as for example in the Angolan MPLA, an explicit turn (in 1990) from 'Marxism–Leninism' to 'democratic socialism'.⁴⁵ Whether that conversion means anything more than acceptance of multi-party politics is still an open question.

The global expansion and the eastern European extension, with its best chances of influence now confined to the Balkans, show that social democracy is still attractive. The Western political landscape is offering it several possibilities. The 'crisis of social democracy' is more complex and multifaceted than the literature has acknowledged.

The future of socialism, as a political project and as a process of social transformation, is another, unforeseeable matter. Contrary to evolutionary down-sloping narratives, the project has recently had its ups as well as its downs. The Swedish and French plans of the 1970s–early 1980s were among the most far-aiming socialist projects of mainstream social democracy ever. Capitalism in eastern Europe had to be restored by stealth. In the early twenty-first century, there was an international Latin American surge of a self-conscious 'socialism of the twenty-first century'. After the financial

43 See <https://socdemAsia.com>. The network organizes ideological training and puts out an online publication, *Socdem Quarterly*. See also N. von Hoffmann, *Social Democratic Parties in Southeast Asia* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2009).

44 M. Diaw, 'Sénégal. La bataille de succession au Parti socialiste aura-t-elle lieu?', *The Conversation*, available at <https://theconversation.com/senegal-la-bataille-de-succession-au-parti-socialiste-aura-t-elle-lieu-121289>, last accessed 5 August 2019.

45 V. Shubin, 'The Socialist International and Africa: 21st Century', available at <https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/ecas2013/paper/14839>.

crash of 2008, socialism has returned as an aspiration of a significant young left in both the United States and the United Kingdom. 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' is still claimed to be the lodestar of the world's largest country.

Socialism has been an inspiring dream for millions of people during two centuries. It would not be scholarly to exclude the possibility that it might be also in a third.

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